DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 362 755 CE 064 860

AUTHOR	Lowden, Kevin; Powney, Janet
TITLE	Where Do We Go from Here? Adult Educational Guidance in Scotland.
INSTITUTION	Scottish Council for Research in Education.
SPONS AGENCY	Scottish Education Dept., Edinburgh.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-947833-82-X; SCRE-RR-48
PUB DATE	Sep 93
NOTE	122p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Scottish Council for Research in Education, 15 St. John Street, Edinburgh EH8 8JR, Scotland.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Counseling; Adult Education; Case Studies; Client Characteristics (Human Services); Counseling Effectiveness; *Counseling Techniques; *Delivery Systems; *Educational Counseling; Foreign Countries; *Guidance Programs; User Needs (Information); *User Satisfaction (Information)
IDENTIFIERS	*Scotland

ABSTRACT

A three-strand study examined the availability, provision, and effectiveness of educational guidance to adults in Scotland. A literature review, results of a 1988 study, and a commissioned update of that study were used to develop an overview of available educational guidance services. Case studies were conducted of six programs selected as representing a broad range of delivery systems and practices (including regional, employer-based, college, and distance learning guidance services). A user survey was administered to 200 adults identified as having used the case study services. The availability and effectiveness of educational guidance and factors affecting provision of guidance were analyzed. A wide variety of sources of educational guidance were identified, and it was found that users were generally satisfied with the guidance they received. Among the problems identified were the uneven availability of guidance services throughout the country, lack of systematic coordination among providers, and inadequate funding to meet identified guidance needs. (Eleven tables are included. Appended are a list of organizations and agencies contacted and advisory committee members, detailed survey completion data, an outline of activities and principles of quality guidance, a table showing client characteristics identified in the user survey, and a glossary of acronyms. Contains 27 references.) (MN)

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WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Adult Educational Guidance in Scotland

Kevin Lowden
Janet Powney

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Adult Educational Guidance in Scotland

Kevin Lowden
Janet Powney

The Scottish Council for Research in Education

SCRE Research Report No 48

First published September 1993

ISBN 0 947833 82X

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One of a series of reports arising from the Adult Education: Provision, Guidance and Progression project (reference R/7/21) funded by the Scottish Office Education Department between October 1991 and November 1993

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Preface

Over the last decade adult education has become a prominent political issue. Since the 1980s projected demographic trends indicated a decline in the number of 16-18 year olds in the population until the end of this century. At a time when the need for a skilled and flexible workforce was seen as important for a competitive economy, the implications of fewer younger people being available for the labour market and higher education caused concern. Recurrent education and training, with an emphasis on increasing participation by adults, was identified as a way of offsetting the effects predicted by the decline in the youth cohort. However, the current recession and high unemployment which has characterised the early 1990s has meant that lower numbers of young people available for the labour market has become a less crucial issue than it once was. Also, with fewer job prospects the motivation for younger people to enter further and higher education has increased. Therefore, institutions and government might arguably come to place a slightly less important emphasis on adults to replace younger people in the labour market and continuing education. However, other emerging factors appear to be influencing the demand from adults for education and appropriate guidance as well as maintaining the pressure on colleges and universities to attract adults. Increased competition for the limited numbers of available jobs and the desire to improve 'survivability' within employment appears to be making accredited courses, perceived by adults as vocationally orientated, increasingly attractive. However well founded, the belief that possessing more and better vocational qualifications will help improve one's prospects in finding and/or keeping a job seems to have maintained adults' interest in taking courses.

As the numbers of higher education institutions proliferate the competition for potential students is also increasing. The result appears to be that institutions are making more efforts to market themselves to all potential 'clients' - including adults as well as younger people. It is becoming more common to see courses targeted at types of potential student, for example older students, women and those with diverse entrance qualifications. The picture seems to be increasingly like the concept of market segmentation used by commercial companies to identify potential customers and target markets.

So, even though the various factors which affect the perceived importance of adult educational provision have altered somewhat over the last decade there is still an interest in providing increased levels of adult education and widening access for adults. As the actual provision of adult education has increased in importance so has the corresponding need for guidance about the choice of routes into and during an educational programme. Guidance is also necessary for those completing one programme and considering continuing their formal studies.

In 1991 the SOED commissioned a large scale research project concerned with adult education in Scotland. The project is made up of four individual, but related studies:

1 case studies of adults' experience of provision, guidance and progression
2 a study of factors affecting adults' educational progression
3 a survey of guidance provision together with in-depth analysis of a small number of guidance providers
4 a special study of adults in schools

The Scottish Community Education Council (SCEC) provided consultancy for the study of progression.

This report focuses on the third study concerned with the provision of guidance for adults in Scotland. This had three strands of inquiry. In a preliminary and brief overview of guidance provision we outline the Scottish national context in which educational guidance takes place and the levels of existing formal provision. Against this backdrop, the second strand used in-depth case study findings to illuminate how various modes of guidance dealing with different client groups have attempted to undertake quality guidance. The findings from the final strand, which looked at clients' experiences of this guidance provision will be used to highlight where the guidance is seen to be particularly effective and also whether there are any mismatches between provision and clients' needs.

We hope that the findings of this report will be useful to those who provide educational guidance for adults as well as those making and implementing policies which will increase the benefits adults gain through continuing their education.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our gratitude to the providers of guidance who comprised our in-depth case studies. They willingly gave up their time to talk to us, provided insights, constructive criticism and helped to identify our sample of adults who used guidance. Our thanks also goes to those adults who were kind enough to participate in our survey of users of educational guidance. The Project Advisory Committee were also extremely helpful in their comments and encouragement throughout the research. Last but not least our thanks goes to Joan Ballantine, the Project Secretary, who tirelessly, and with good humour, worked with us to produce this report, the various questionnaires and materials required through out the project within the required deadlines.

Summary of main findings

Aims and method

Commissioned by the Scottish Office Education Department, this sixteen month (January 1992 - April 1993) project aimed to explore the extent of guidance provision for adults in Scotland and factors affecting quality guidance. The project used three main approaches to address these areas. Strand 1 comprised an overview of current educational guidance for adults in Scotland. Strand 2 used in-depth case studies of seven guidance providers to look at how they provided guidance and the factors they identified as affecting their ability to provide good guidance. Finally, Strand 3 surveyed 158 adults who had used the services of the seven providers. The survey focused on these users' experiences of guidance and opinions of the value of the advice and information they received.

An overview of guidance provision in Scotland

The findings from various aspects of this project have enabled us to obtain a view of the current state of Scottish educational guidance and the context in which provision operates. These findings, covered mainly in **Chapter 1** of the report, have highlighted some national and regional guidance issues which have implications for the provision of quality adult educational guidance. These are:

Current formal adult educational guidance provision

Since the mid 1980s there has been a marked increase in provision of guidance for adults in Scotland. Although some examples of good practice show providers adapting to local needs and conditions, general provision is still unevenly distributed throughout the country, and ranges from minimal (information only) to high quality provision based on the criteria of quality provision espoused by such organisations and associations as the Unit for Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) and National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults (NAEGA).

Adults' access to national guidance provision

As a result of the current distribution of guidance provision and lack of formal, well publicised networks, adults' access to guidance is still too much determined by chance. Factors such as where adults live and what they discover to be available affect their uptake of guidance rather than the actual range of services in their area. There would still seem to be a need for more co-ordinated and high profile provision.

Support for adult guidance at a national level

Provision needs to be adequately supported by government, particularly in terms of long-term funding. Also, additional support in the form of an independent national guidance initiative, which now looks imminent, could improve national co-ordination and dissemination of good practice. Effective support from such sources would help facilitate quicker, more accurate and effective responses to client demand.

Providing quality guidance - the views of providers

Part of our project focused on seven providers identified as offering good practice in their guidance services. We examined the factors which they felt affected their guidance and the organisational features they had adopted to help them provide quality guidance. The findings and issues to arise from this work are covered in **Chapters 3, 6 and 7** and in summary were:

The importance of funding and resources

The unpredictability of short-term funding causes the most anxiety among providers. The absolute level of funding inevitably affects the scope of provision, the staff establishment and the facilities available to the service. Other features which also have a bearing on the quality of the service and may be vulnerable to the vagaries of funding include:

- staff retention and, therefore, morale;
- the extent of innovation;
- development of mid and long-term strategies;
- decisions on publicising and extending all or parts of the service;
- the ability to provide appropriate staff development.

The importance of the skills and commitment of guidance personnel

Guidance personnel are characterised by their high levels of commitment. While staff development and possessing guidance qualifications are seen by providers as desirable and necessary, they stressed the importance of personal experience and qualities. These qualities included having high levels of motivation and being a good, non-directive communicator.

The limitations of current guidance qualifications

Some formal guidance qualifications were seen as limited in their usefulness, these were generally aimed at working with younger people and had not moved with the times. Consequently, new, specific adult guidance qualifications were eagerly awaited. As newer qualifications become available, providers should be encouraged and supported in identifying staff development needs and in obtaining the appropriate training.

The necessity of networking and regional co-ordination

Networking was important primarily to overcome the problem of guidance personnel "having to know everything". Also, networking can ameliorate some aspects of a shortage of resources, for example, by referring clients whom providers are unable deal with because their own services are constrained by limited funding. The benefits of regional networking include improving efficiency, economy (for example in preventing duplication and promoting appropriate referrals) and dissemination of good practice and training.

The importance of monitoring effectiveness of guidance provision

While there was much variation in the extent to which the providers formally monitored their provision, all of them recognised the importance of this activity. In Scotland and the wider UK there is consensus on the definitions and broad

criteria of good guidance, however it seems more difficult to operationalise these at a local level. All providers in our study commented on the resource implications of implementing a formal monitoring system, this was particularly true of smaller providers. Systematic monitoring and evaluation is essential to all guidance services for purposes of accountability for the spending of public monies, monitoring the validity of the claims made by a service and providing information pertinent to making necessary changes to the service in the best interests of their clients.

The benefits of possessing formal written policies on guidance

The providers with formal policies on their services were more able to compare actual provision with their stated aims. Such providers were also more likely to use ongoing monitoring for the purposes of accountability, validity and to inform changes to their services

Clients' guidance needs and satisfaction with provision

One strand of our project looked at the clients' perspective on adult educational guidance. These adults (158 in number) had been identified using the records of the providers in our seven case studies and who then had chosen to take part in our survey. The demographic characteristics of the clients suggest that these respondents were perhaps better educated than the national average. The findings and issues to arise from this strand of the project are covered in **Chapters 4, 5 and 7**. The main themes to emerge from the survey were:

Nature of client demand for guidance.

The majority of clients in our survey were mainly seeking information on the availability of courses and vocationally orientated advice, including advice on how to improve employment prospects or change careers. Their 'secondary' needs included how to get on to courses; what opportunities existed after certain courses; information on courses related to personal interest; financial advice (mainly bursaries) and assessment of their abilities.

Client's overall satisfaction with the guidance provision

Overall clients appeared to be satisfied with provision but wanted to be able to identify sources of guidance more easily and sought accurate and up-to-date information and advice. Adults appreciate a range of modes of delivery of service, but whatever mode they use they particularly appreciate a friendly and encouraging approach which builds their confidence. The majority of adults felt that the providers possessed the principles of quality guidance provision that are recognised by the guidance community itself. Their only criticisms focused on the unattractive setting in which guidance was sometimes provided and on the inadequate way in which services were publicised. Most clients felt they had received broad benefits from their experience of guidance such as knowing where to obtain guidance the next time they wanted it.

What further research is needed

In reporting the findings of our research on adult educational guidance in Scotland it became apparent that there were many examples of good practice. However, it was also clear that there were a number of areas which still needed to be addressed by

research, evaluation and monitoring. Areas for attention include:

- why do some adults not use guidance services?
- what are the outcomes of guidance - ie what happens to adults after they receive advice and information?
- what makes for effective interaction, communication and rapport between providers and clients? ie; we know a lot about the structure of guidance provision but less about how provider staff and adults interact and communicate.

1 Educational guidance for adults in Scotland

In this chapter we set the scene for the rest of our report by looking at the development of the concept of educational guidance for adults and guidance provision in the UK and Scotland. We then examine the range of current guidance provision for adults in Scotland. We compare the range of services available to adults to assess whether there are gaps in provision. Finally we look at how the current guidance provision in Scotland fits in with the overall context of increased opportunities for adults to participate in education and training.

The concept of guidance for adults

In Scotland, the definitions and concepts of educational guidance for adults have, generally, been consistent with those used in the wider UK where the concept had its roots in the 1970s, when guidance services for adults first began to appear. The first expressly adult service was in Northern Ireland in 1970 (The Adult Vocational Guidance Service), followed by one at Hatfield Polytechnic. By the mid-1970s, similar developments throughout the Western world, particularly in the UK, USA and Germany, were united in their guidance principles and activities. The result was services which provided information, advice counselling, advocacy and feedback activities all of which were based in a client-centred approach on individual adults with a 'commitment to represent the interests of groups of adult learners in bringing about positive changes in the education system' (Rivis 1992).

Since 1979 the phrase *educational guidance for adults* has become commonly used, with a main impetus being provided by the Advisory Council for Adult Continuing Education (ACACE) recommendation of that year which was adopted by the National Association of Educational Guidance Service (1983). The Education Advisory Services Project (Butler 1986) the Department of Education and Science (DES), Unit for Development of Adult Continuing Education (UDACE) and the then Manpower Services Commission (MSC) from 1984 onwards.

Early debates focused on the concepts and phrasing of guidance and while there is now much agreement over the constituent activities and concepts of guidance there are still some minor points of disagreement. For example, guidance is sometimes seen as having directive overtones by those working in counselling. Semantic rather than actual differences between guidance activities have also been issues of debate. For example, counselling and advising are sometimes seen as distinct activities in their own right. However, the Advice, Guidance and Counselling Lead Body (1992) stressed that this is a semantic difficulty rather than a real issue, as 'in guidance counselling skills and accurate information giving are utilised rather than the fuller definitions of either counselling or advising'.

Another area where there has been debate is on the differences between guidance which is expressly related to personal, vocational, training or educational needs. This is perhaps not surprising when one considers it is part of the same debate on the demarcation between vocational education and wider education. Some see the debate itself as spurious given the complex inter-relationship of adults' motivations and needs for education. In reality, a grand mix of vocational, personal and educational orientations results from this complexity of motivations.

Since 1986, there has been a general consensus that any definitions of guidance should cover the seven key activities set down by UDACE in *The Challenge of Change* after national consultation (see Appendix 3a). These activities are usually seen as operating within a set of values and principles of good guidance (see Appendix 3b) derived from the UDACE description of guidance networking. From the 1970s the principles of good practice had largely been taken up by guidance providers throughout the UK, often in the form of a code of practice and reflected a commitment to empowerment, community development, access and equal opportunities. However, commentators on educational guidance for adults (Rivis 1992) have noted competing values emerging in guidance, centred on the notion of economic individualism with an emphasis on instrumentality — The relative influence of these different sets of values has shifted over the last fifteen years, reflecting significant social and political changes during that period (Rivis 1992).

The literature claims that while the seven UDACE activities of guidance are similar to those used for young people in vocational careers guidance, there is an important difference in adult educational guidance based on its 'multiple value base'. The commitment to advocacy and feedback which is seen as core to adult guidance has, until recently, had less emphasis in careers guidance (Watts *et al* 1987). Guidance for young people has been around longer than that for adults in the form of careers guidance. Therefore adult guidance has had the opportunity to reflect on guidance for young people and assess and revise the definitions and principles of guidance which is suitable for adults. One issue which has yet to be resolved or even fully addressed is whether guidance for young people and that for adults needs to be made up of different activities. We would argue that good guidance activities and principles are the same for young people and adults.

Relatively recently in adult educational guidance there has been some revision, although this is not universally accepted, to the seven UDACE guidance activities. The Standing Conference of Associations involved in Guidance in Educational Settings (SCAGES) in 1991 proposed three further categories or activities to the UDACE set in an attempt to incorporate collective as well as individual activities. These were teaching, networking and managing.

Scottish guidance providers have, in general, taken up the UDACE definitions or activities of educational guidance for adults, associated codes of practice, and underlying values. This is perhaps not surprising given

that they have also been influenced by many of the social and economic factors which have affected wider UK educational guidance provision for adults.

The development of educational guidance in Scotland

Currently there is no literature which summarises the historical development of educational guidance in Scotland. This might be in some way linked to the absence of a national strategy for guidance provision. While there may be common agreement over the principles and features of good guidance, there is no overall strategy for adult guidance in Scotland. Diversity of provision might be considered as one result of this lack of overall strategy (and this study looks at the positive and negative aspects of this diversity).

While it is not within the remit of this study to chronicle the full historical development of educational guidance for adults in Scotland, it is worthwhile pointing out some of the important issues. The development of adult educational guidance in England and Wales has been complex (for an excellent summary see Rivis 1992) but has, since 1988, had the input of the National Educational Guidance Initiative to assist and shape it. Such an initiative and government support has been missing in Scotland, although this may now be changing following the announcement by government in March 1993 that it intends to support a national guidance initiative for adults in Scotland.

Despite the lack of a national initiative on guidance and differing national education policies, many other factors which are similar to those in England and Wales have helped to shape adult educational guidance in Scotland. For example, Scotland has largely shared the broad economic and social changes which have occurred in England and Wales: the economic decline of the seventies and subsequent cycles of recession with the associated industrial and social tensions; the emergence of movements against discrimination and disadvantage; the issue of adult access to education (particularly higher education) and overall demographic trends in the population. In common with England and Wales an increase in youth unemployment at the end of the seventies led to many job-creation and training schemes. However, in the eighties projections of school-leavers predicted a dramatic fall in their numbers and so interest turned to adults as a resource to meet the resulting demands and gaps in the labour market and education.

Adult access to education was supported by such initiatives as establishing the Open University and an expansion of teacher training in the mid 1960s which attracted mature students in large numbers for the first time. More recently increased flexibility in education through, for example, the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP), Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CATS) and modular schemes, the development of SVQs and even developments for the University of the Third Age - all these initiatives support the concept of life long learning which is now here to stay.

As measures for widening access to education for adults gained importance and developed there was a recognition that quality, independent and unbiased guidance for adults would have to develop in tandem. In the UK in general, educational guidance for adults has evolved and learned from the earliest

examples of provision, with works such as *Links to Learning* (ACACE 1979) and *The Challenge of Change* (UDACE 1986) having a major impact on thinking in adult educational guidance and, therefore, its development.

Guidance has always been seen as central to adult education opportunities and provision in the UK. Pressure for adult guidance often came from practitioners in further education, non-traditional higher education (especially the Open University) and adult educators. The careers services were not so active in developing guidance for adults as their main concern had to be with the rising levels of unemployed young people. However, careers services were aware of the need for adult guidance and their representatives frequently voiced this concern, calling for more resources to meet the needs of adults.

In Scotland as across the rest of the UK, early guidance services received very little, if any, funding and relied on a relatively small number of committed people. Also, Rivis argued that due to the informality and voluntary basis of most of the guidance, it was 'invisible to policy makers and resource controllers; it was also consequently unaccountable and not subject to external monitoring or evaluation' (Rivis 1992).

The 1980s saw some local authorities taking a greater interest in adult educational guidance and devoting some resources to pilot small initiatives. For example Fife Regional Council's Adult Support Unit originally started off as a pilot project in 1986. Between 1987 -1990 it received more staff and resources and became the permanent unit it is today. In many cases these initiatives were based on short-term funding and suffered from a high turnover of staff and the insecurity of the guidance service. In cases where funding was allocated from the base budget of the local authority, naturally, more security existed. Networks of guidance 'activists' began to appear in the regions and nationally. These varied, and still do, in their co-ordination and the formality of their links with one another. This networking facilitated the referral of adult clients to more suitable providers and disseminated good practice and information between providers.

After 1988, far greater differences existed between Scotland and England and Wales in the development of educational guidance for adults. The main reason for this was the establishment by government of the National Educational Guidance Initiative (NEGI) in England and Wales. This provided £1.5 million to local authorities for the development of guidance services based on the UDACE principles. The Initiative also acted as a disseminator of information and good practice on adult guidance and as a consultant and advisor to the local authorities when bidding for government funds for guidance and on general guidance matters. It also informed the DES, the Welsh Office and Department of Employment on adult educational guidance issues. Until 1993, no similar initiative has been taken in Scotland. This might help explain why the development of adult educational guidance in Scotland has been less co-ordinated than in England and Wales. While Scottish adult guidance provision has been shaped and has benefited from the lessons learned and disseminated by other providers, Scottish providers have not had government support on the scale that has existed in England and Wales. In Strathclyde, the Adult Education Gateway is an example of how guidance provision can evolve into a region wide set of services which is fully supported by the regional council under the auspices of the regional careers service. While this is the most extensively developed regional system, other

regions are progressing at differing rates and attempting to formalise the often considerable informal guidance networks which already exist.

Without a co-ordinating body such as the NEGI, what does the current range or state of formal adult educational guidance in Scotland look like? It is difficult to gauge the effect of not having the support of a central agency. We can only gauge the effect by examining the current range and nature of provision.

The range of guidance provision in Scotland

Today, educational guidance for adults is available from a very diverse range of providers and sources. The HMI report *The Education Of Adults In Scotland* (1992) summarised the range of services as covering '...Job Centres, libraries, institutions, broadcasting services, road shows, the Careers Service and Employers' (p37)

The report also mentions the role played by aspects of the Community Education Service (CES) and voluntary organisations which offer general information and advice such as the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Consumer Advice Centres or neighbourhood advisory services. These organisations will, where appropriate, offer basic information and referral services.

In trying to 'map' or gain an overview of Scottish adult educational guidance provision, the first stage of our project identified a wide range of providers with differing dimensions to their services. In this section, we look at where adults can get educational guidance now and examine these dimensions of service to build up a comparative view of the range of provision in Scotland.

Where is adult educational guidance available?

Below, we indicate the range of educational guidance provision available to adults in Scotland. We then compare the services offered by these various kinds of providers.

1. ***Broad-based, in-depth guidance which has open access to all adults***

Regional Adult Guidance Units. These occur where the regional council has taken the initiative to develop an adult guidance service in addition to existing careers services. The actual structure, remit and scope of the unit will depend on the regional council and resources. These units have a high level of autonomy but are often operated under the auspices of the regional careers service. Often the remit of such units will include targeting particular groups of adults such as the long-term unemployed. Examples of such regional adult guidance services include Strathclyde's Continuing Education Gateway and Fife's Adult Support Unit.

2. ***Broad-based, in-depth guidance which has restricted access***

For example, *Linking Education and Disability (LEAD).* Formerly the Scottish Centre for Tuition of the Disabled, LEAD specialises in helping adults with disabilities to participate in education at all levels. Consequently, its guidance role is paramount, and undoubtedly it fulfils all the UDACE functions of guidance, being particularly active in advocacy and feedback.

3. Guidance provided mainly as part of an educational provider's service and therefore can have fairly restricted access

FE Colleges, Central Institutions, Universities, Secondary and Community schools. The guidance systems within these providing agencies are variously called the guidance structure, student services, welfare service, advice service, or careers service. Once enrolled and established on a course of study, an adult should be able to make use of that agency's student support system. Guidance staff may also be called upon to offer pre-entry guidance on an ad hoc basis. Staff designated as advisers in a regional adult guidance service, however, must ensure that they neither offer partisan advice, nor recruit specifically for their own institution.

In many regions, there has been significant development of guidance within further education. For example, Tayside has, since the mid-1980s, had designated Guidance staff in each college. Their role has extended beyond the enrolled students in colleges to offering a guidance service for any member of the public. In Strathclyde, each FE college has been required to implement a guidance policy, and to participate in the Continuing Education Gateway System of Gateway points. 'Options and Choices' modules are extensively used in FE. Now colleges have left education authorities' jurisdiction, the future of guidance services is unclear. Under the new formula funding system for FE begins in April 1993, funding is not mediated by education authorities. Consequently the colleges will run their own budgets. Therefore, the priority which guidance receives in each college might vary.

Community Education Service–including Adult Basic Education (ABE), with a less formal approach to learning, may often be the first contact point for enquirers. Adults participating in a local learning or leisure activity or special project often feel more confident about asking for information, leading on to guidance being offered, in a non-threatening environment. Informal Adult Education is effective in attracting traditional non-participants and informing them of existing learning possibilities. Guidance in such education is vital work, helping adults to move on by confidence building and client-centred support. The CES also offers certificated courses too and isideal for adults who want to progress from informal training to more formal training.

4. Vocationally-orientated guidance which has open access to all adults

Careers Service. Regional and Islands Authority careers services, unless they form a major part of a purpose-made adult guidance service, do not have a mandate for dealing with adults. Some services have designated staff who offer adult guidance; others see adults as the work load of staff permits. This means in practice that adults who contact their local careers office are not turned away, but may not always have access to an adult guidance specialist.

Job Centres. They exist primarily to link those looking for work with employment which is available. Some may offer the extra facility of a Training Access Point (TAP) (client-operated) with staff assistance if requested; some may have the part-time or occasional presence of an educational guidance worker from a local project. Otherwise, educational enquiries tend to be referred to a local college.

provide the information aspect of guidance. Depending upon resources and staff expertise, they may be able to provide a fuller guidance service and should offer appropriate referrals. Local libraries cannot be expected to have on the spot sophisticated reference resources.

In practice, few libraries seem to have become involved in guidance networks, a sizeable proportion of the adult population do not use libraries and in rural/ remote areas there may be no library, or an infrequent mobile service. Libraries vary widely in the services they offer to their public; some may house a TAP with a member of staff on call when assistance is required; others may have a good stock of local information; others may acquire information on request only.

Voluntary organisations at national and local level: WEA, Scottish Refugee Council, The Number Shop, University Settlement, also *General Information/Advice Agencies* - agencies which draw on voluntary support such as Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Consumer Advice Centres or neighbourhood advisory services, dealing primarily with consumer, personal or financial enquiries, often receive enquiries about education or training. They offer basic information and referral. This is often to the nearest educational provider to the adult rather than to a guidance agency.

Public Events/Media Activities

(a) *Open days held by universities, colleges or schools.* While these raise awareness and allow access to printed or on-screen information, they do not permit face-to-face guidance sessions which are time-consuming. However, many adults take advantage of such events and make appointments to discuss or consolidate their plans afterwards.

(b) *Careers Exhibitions.* These have tended to concentrate on school leavers, or those continuing into further or higher education, and on recruitment. However, information for the adult learner is there, though not always overtly displayed.

(c) *Targeted events.* For example, a series of one day guidance events for women returners run by SIACE between 1986 and 1990 endeavoured to provide, under one roof, a chance for participants to acquire information from many sources, about opportunities in education, training, career and employment. They were able to exchange experiences and uncertainties, express their individual and collective needs, make arrangements for guidance sessions with professionals they met, and even increase their confidence in themselves a little. However, after these events, much depended on the motivation of the women to follow-up their interest. Often there was no external guidance focus and they would have to rely on the availability of a professional whose work commitments may leave left little room for guidance provision.

(d) *Career and educational media articles.* Articles in the press and particularly in women's magazines, cover aspects of career change, learning something new, or training to return to work. These features create demand for information which in fact is a request for educational guidance. Unfortunately, many magazine articles are read when out of date, and references are no longer accessible.

(e) *Collaboration between the media and guidance services.* One example of this is the programme put on as part of the BBCs Basic Skills Initiative (a two year project).

Unemployed people, after 3-6 months of unemployment, are invited to attend a 20 minute interview under the RESTART programme. (Names are supplied by the Unemployment Benefit Office). During this interview they will receive guidance on anything -claims, addiction, employment, education - guidance being mostly referrals to providers or support agencies.

Job Review Workshops. These were originally set up to serve unemployed professional people but are now open to anyone, skilled or unskilled, looking for a change of direction. A two-day course offers guidance towards a new job, using existing skills and building upon them to increase opportunities.

5. Vocationally-orientated guidance which has restricted access

Graduate Careers Advisory Service (GCAS). Through 'Mutual Aid' - graduates are entitled to use their previous or their nearest GCAS for some time after graduating. There is also a Graduate Career Line (helpline) for job-changers and unemployed graduates (currently based in Bristol, servicing UK). This has now been complemented by a Scottish Graduate Careerline, part of a new programme to help unemployed graduates, (established at Strathclyde University by Scottish Enterprise, Scottish Higher Education Careers Services and the Central Services Unit).

Job Clubs. These emphasise self-help. Those who attend must show keenness to obtain work as they are job-oriented. After an induction course which includes guidance on job search and self presentation, participants use the resource centre to follow-up leads each day. Individual guidance is maintained, particularly looking at education and training.

Adult/Employment Training. These are private guidance services contracted by government Agents provide individual guidance for every new entrant to their scheme, with the outcome being a Personal Action Plan for implementation when the trainee is placed with an Employment Training Manager. Many Training Agents ceased to operate from April 1992 and potential trainees were recruited directly by Adult/Employment Training Managers - A continuation of guidance is expected throughout the trainees' employment, with pre-exit guidance also being offered. There appear to be wide variations in the nature and quality of guidance offered both by Agents and by Managers. Few are in Guidance networks (one notable exception was the Fife Adult Support Unit which acted as the Fife Training Agent until April 1991) There is little information on the effectiveness of the guidance provided by Agents and Managers.

Employers. Many people may request guidance at their place of work, whether it be from their immediate supervisor or from the training or the personnel staff. Most large employers have a sophisticated in-house guidance and on-going support system for their employees. Where employers are included in local guidance networks they can increase their awareness of guidance referral resources outside of the workplace, and can collaborate with local providers of learning opportunities.

6. Broad-based, basic guidance which has open access to all adults

Libraries. Main libraries with extensive reference departments are well placed to

This offered the Strathclyde Continuing Education Gateway as a guidance resource for Scotland in the first year when viewers phoned in response a message at the end of the programme. In the second year, a direct helpline could not be arranged for Scotland for financial reasons. Consequently, viewers phoning the helpline in Bristol received a leaflet naming their local guidance contact. This was less than satisfactory - 'local' was often wrongly attributed, and guidance was only available at several removes from the stimulus for the original phone call.

(f) *Adult Learners Week (ALW)*. This first took place 9–15 March 1992 and repeated in 1993. Tremendous efforts were made nationally and regionally to ensure that there would be some form of guidance provision available for adults who were motivated by any of the ALW events or the Second Chance broadcasts to contact the UK helpline. However, many arrangements were ad hoc, and could not be sustained beyond the short-term. Further analysis may reveal gaps in provision of guidance, either temporarily during ALW or more importantly, in the long-term availability of adult educational guidance in Scotland.

*7. **Privately funded guidance services***

Private Counselling Agencies. There are several in Scotland, offering individual interviews, psychometric testing and career analysis including preparation of curriculum vitaes. Unlike every other guidance provider in this report, the private agencies charge fees. The extent to which this deters or prohibits adults from using them is not clear.

At first sight there are many providers of adult educational guidance, but how do they compare in terms of their dimensions of service? When we refer to 'dimensions' of service we mean such attributes as open access, level and depth of guidance offered, orientation of the guidance (eg explicitly vocational or broader, more general content). Some providers will have certain dimensions in common, but each will usually have a unique collection of them, and, therefore, a different 'profile'. For example, educational guidance available from a library might share open-access with a public event or a Job Centre, However, other aspects of their provision such as the level of information and advice they can offer will be quite different. It should be noted that other analysts could select differing dimensions to the ones we have used here, and that some dimensions are more complex than they might at first seem. For example, private guidance agencies have, theoretically, open access, however, they are usually open to all who can *afford* the services.

Services which draw on voluntary support can vary greatly in the types of educational advice and information they can offer. Some will provide basic information and referral where others can offer more targeted support to particular groups.

In Table 1 (overleaf) we look at the range of providers of adult educational guidance in Scotland and compare their dimensions of service to get a better perspective of the overlap in services and of any gaps which exist. The headings under which we have organised the different kinds of educational guidance provision for adults might be considered.

Table 1: Providers of adult educational guidance and their dimensions of service

Provider	*Dimensions of service*				
	Focus of guidance	**Depth/level of guidance**	**Access**	**Cost to user**	**Modes of delivery**
Regional adult guidance units	Broad scope. Content suited to clients' needs but some have core remit to provide guidance for specific groups (eg the unemployed)	In-depth Covers all UDACE activities	Open to all but possible emphasis on attracting target groups	Free*	Face-to-face Telephone Literature Group work Computer-assisted
Specialist non-profit agencies, eg LEAD	Broad scope. Content suited to clients' needs	In-depth Covers all UDACE activities	Particular groups only, ie special needs	Free	Face-to-face Telephone Literature Group work
Education Institutions FE and HE providers	Broad scope. Content suited to clients' needs. Can cover pre-entry ongoing and pre-exit	Varies across institutions but usually can offer in-depth guidance or referral	Enquirers/applicants and their students	Free	Face-to-face Telephone Literature Short induction courses
Community Education Service and WEA	Broad scope. Content suited to clients' needs. Can cover pre-entry ongoing and pre-exit	In-depth available with guidance being a key component of Service	Open to all	Free	Face-to-face Telephone Literature Taught courses Group work
Careers Service	Broad *vocational* scope Content suited to clients' needs	Varies depending on resources and abilities of staff at particular site. Usually informing advising some assessment. Will refer to regional Adult Guidance Unit if there is one	Open to all	Free	Face-to-face Telephone' Literature Possibly computer-assisted
TAP	Broad vocational scope. Information available on voc and training courses	Detailed database of information on courses including entrance requirements content and qualifications	Over to all	Free*	Computer data base accessed by user Some might use Advisory Service for users and employers Telephone Face-to-face Literature Referral

Job Centres	Usually broad *vocational* scope. Varies depending on links with guidance agencies	Varies depending on links with guidance agencies. Usually informing, and referral	Open to all but aimed at the unemployed	Free	Face-to-face Literature Telephone
Job review w/shops	Usually broad *vocational* scope	Intensive short guidance on new vocational directions based on existing skills	Open to all but aimed at the unemployed	Free	Face-to-face Group work Literature
Graduate Careers Advisory Service	Usually broad *vocational* careers scope	Normally careers information and advice	Graduates who are unemployed or job-changers	Free	Face-to-face Telephone Literature
Job Clubs	Usually narrowly *vocational* scope. Job orientated	In-depth but specifically on job search and self presentation	Unemployed only	Free	Face-to face Group work Literature Self help Use of career resources
Private Agencies contracted by government	Usually specifically vocational/training orientated	In-depth vocational/training assessment	Entrants to government training schemes	Government commission Free	Face-to-face Literature Group work "Action Plan"
Employers	Usually employees' vocational and career development	Varies depending on employer. At best, can include sophisticated employee support	Own employees	Free	Face-to-face Literature Some group work
Libraries	Broad scope usually in the form of reference literature. Can act as 'host' for other services, ie TAP	Basic level with informing being the main UDACE category undertaken	Open to all	Free	Usually literature Host for TAP and public and media events
Voluntary agencies, eg The Number Shop	Broad scope. Content suited to clients' needs	Basic, information and referral service	Open to all	Free	Face-to-face Telephone Literature
Public & media events	Varies depending on remit	Usually basic information giving but some can offer further advice and referrals	Open to all, although some are targeted	Free	Face-to-face Telephone Literature Exhibitions Group work
Private guidance/counselling agencies	Broad scope suited to clients' needs	In-depth activities geared to client needs and ability to pay fees	Open to all who can afford to pay fees for the service	Fee-based varying on extent of service	Varies depending on provider but can include Face-to-face Literature

* **Note:** Some providers will offer guidance to employers and other agencies, ie TAP might do a course search in an employers region and will usually charge a small fee.

Table 1 provides an overview of educational guidance in Scotland. We can see that much of the guidance attempts to respond to clients' needs by tailoring the scope and depth of guidance they deliver. However, it seems that in-depth, extensive services seem to be less common than one might hope. Fortunately, most guidance for adults is open to all and free of charge. Access is only restricted in certain unemployment training initiatives, aspects of FE, HE and Community education guidance (on-course, and pre-exit), targeted provision and employers' services. Apart from guidance offered by private agencies and employers, all guidance available to adults is largely publicly funded. Some might receive funding from a number of sources, for example, the European Social Fund.

From our overview can we say whether any gaps exist in guidance provision for adults? It does seem that comprehensive, in-depth guidance which can be delivered through a range of modes seems to be the exception rather than the rule. This might be due to resource implications. Although individual providers might not provide extensive guidance this does not necessarily mean that adults will not get the help they need. Providers might make use of networks to refer adults to other, more appropriate sources of guidance. Many of these networks are informal, and, therefore, their impact on the efficacy of guidance provision in general is hard to determine.

The UDACE activities which characterise good guidance vary widely across providers, with the scarcest being advocacy and feeding back information on unmet needs to providers of education. These are important activities as many adults lack confidence and without some from of advocacy might falter in going further along the route to participating in education. Feedback to providers on the unmet needs of adults, and often those of employers and other guidance providers, is also extremely important. Such feedback is one of the main ways to bring about change in practice which, in turn, will better reflect the needs and circumstances of those who can benefit from education.

So far, this chapter has looked at the concepts underlying good guidance, UK-wide influences on the development of guidance and then provided an overview of the range of guidance provision in Scotland. Finally, we look at the wider social and economic context in which this guidance occurs to highlight its importance in a time of rapid change and uncertainty.

Context of greater and wider educational opportunities

On the one hand, it is exciting that there is so much diversity of provision, ranging from the BBC, regional and central governmental initiatives to educational providers. However, what is of concern is whether or not this diversity is meeting the wide range of needs of increasing numbers of adults who are seeking guidance yet whose personal circumstances and needs might be quite different.

Since 1989 there has been evidence to suggest that the demand for guidance in Scotland is increasing and that compared to England and Wales, Scottish adults are more interested in education and better educated (Nelson 1989). This commitment to education is an indicator of an increased likelihood

to want guidance. In addition, as we saw earlier in this chapter, social and economic changes and pressures have added an impetus to increased flexibility in education in terms of admissions procedures and modes of attendance. It was hoped that this would lead to increased adult participation in education and training, which in turn was seen, and still is seen, as a way of ameliorating knowledge and skills shortages in the labour force and a perceived shortage of school-leavers entering higher education. Now the prospect of increased competition between providers of education fuels the need to offer still more flexibility. Current examples of this flexibility include the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP), increased credit accumulation and transfer developments, modular and unitised courses, and general flexibility in entrance requirements.

This complex set of pressures and resulting flexibility in courses has led to an increase in educational opportunities for adults, but as research has shown (for example, Munn and MacDonald 1988, ACACE 1982), adults' awareness of such opportunities is often limited. This is particularly true of those who most need it - the lower socio-economic groups. Similarly adults, awareness of where to get guidance on which opportunity to pursue is equally limited. Three factors make it difficult for adults to identify suitable guidance provision -

- There is no one point of call for guidance
- There is limited formal networking
- There is a reluctance by guidance providers to adopt too high a profile unless subsequent demand can be met

The findings of Nelson (1989), Docherty (1988), Hart (1988b) have shown that adults usually experience difficulty in identifying suitable guidance provision, the result of which can be frustration and disillusionment.

One can see a paradox developing in the education and guidance arena due to the current social and economic context. There is consensus that there are many reasons for increased participation in adult education and the associated provision of quality guidance to inform and assist adults to make decisions about education that suits them. However, in a recession, when employment is at a premium, many people will attempt to take what ever work they can and any long-term vocational development assisted by education might take a 'back seat'. The guidance such individuals will seek will be narrowly focused on where to get jobs and how best to market oneself for those jobs.

One could speculate that the demand for adult education is increasingly likely to come from people already in employment who might wish to do part-time, day-release or evening courses to improve their 'vocational marketability'. There could be an increase in demand from adults seeking those courses which will assist career development or career change. Some tentative indications of this have emerged from our case studies reported in Chapter 3. In the current economic climate, it is arguable that adults, particularly those with family and financial commitments, will be less well placed to take up full-time educational opportunities. Therefore, the demand for educational guidance from those still in work will correspondingly be for vocationally orientated courses which can be done outside working hours. In this current climate and context we could see the demand for adult guidance swing away from educational guidance towards more explicit careers information, advice and assessment of their abilities.

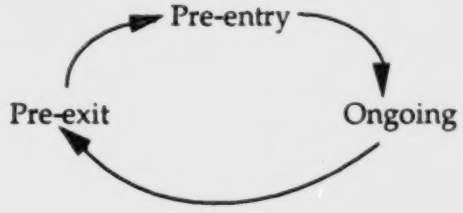
Ironically, the current economic situation could result in greater participation in further and higher education by school-levers rather than the projected fall. Young people when faced with the prospect of few jobs might increasingly decide to stay in education after leaving-school and go on to either further or higher education. Therefore, the demand for educational guidance could possibly be greatest from young people wanting help on what courses to do. This will be welcomed by institutions needing full-time students' fees to remain 'viable'.

At the beginning of this chapter we quoted Rivis (1992) to illustrate that the relative influence of different values shape the concept of guidance and these values are themselves shaped by the social and political context of that time in history. So too, it seems, the context of society as a whole shapes not only the demand for guidance but also the nature of that provision. The need for quality, comprehensive and in-depth adult guidance which can meet the diverse range of clients' needs has never been greater. The increase in wider educational opportunities, more uncertainty over employment, including the demise of the concept of 'a career for life' and the need for re-training, means that adults need an accurate, reliable map to find their way through the current 'jungle' of opportunities *and* problems. That map is adult guidance.

2 Aims and methods

The starting point for this study was to draw on various available definitions of guidance to clarify a definition which would be most useful given our focus on adult learners. The consensus view of guidance definitions and activities formulated by UDACE (1986) provides a framework for examining client and provider views of guidance provision. The Standing Conference of Associations on Guidance (SCAGES) added three further dimensions to the UDACE definition: teaching, networking and managing. In the absence of a national body with responsibility for guidance, networking is important to providers and apparently widely used (SCAGES 1991).

This study is concerned with adults who could make demands on guidance services at three potentially different times:- what we call *pre-entry* guidance which enables adults to select a programme of study appropriate for their needs; *ongoing* educational guidance relevant during a course of study; and *pre-exit* guidance which supports adults who are leaving a course (or employment) and looking at extending their education.



Our definition of guidance

Our definition of guidance - and subsequently the choice of providers and their clients for this study - had to reflect these different points at which guidance might be sought. Individuals could ask for educational guidance at all three phases or might only want support at one or two stages.

By guidance we therefore mean:

> any information, advice or support which helps adults make choices about education, training and employment, or, which helps them while doing courses and training.

This definition does not cover 'teaching' or any supplementary or remedial learning support but it does make explicit the need for guidance while people are on courses as well as when contemplating possible courses. It also incorporates vocational aspects of educational guidance. The seven UDACE activities which constitute good guidance, which we looked at in Chapter 1, obviously still apply here.

Previous studies have provided an overview of the range of educational guidance in the UK and in Scotland, but our research focused for the first time on the experience of guidance from the point of view of providers and users in the

context of the total provision available in Scotland. The purposes of our study were to:

- map existing guidance provision for adults;
- compare and contrast different approaches to provision;
- assess the effectiveness of different approaches in terms of adults who use guidance services.

Our definition of adult was reliant on that used by each provider. Some defined adult clients as anyone not at school (eg Case study G) while others (eg Case study E) defined adults as those who had some sort of gap since leaving full-time compulsory education.

The main research questions

Essentially the research questions emerging from the aims of our study concerned forms of provision, resource implications and effectiveness:

What are the main sources of advice to adults about education and training opportunities in Scotland? Is there inter-agency collaboration on providing these?

We felt that given the limitations of time and resources, the study should primarily focus on 'formal' guidance provision, that which is institutionally recognised and resourced. At the same time we should acknowledge the role played by 'informal' guidance networks such as friends, relatives, colleagues and employers in advising adult learners. Already the other linked studies in this project were indicating the importance of these informal contacts and networks in individuals' lives. To conceptualise formal guidance provision we found it helpful to identify both the loop of educational stages when guidance can be required by adults as mentioned above and the mode of provision.

Docherty (1988) carrying out a study for the Scottish Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (SIACE) noted the considerable regional variations in guidance received by adults. Answers to our first set of research questions bring a later perspective to the range of provision, ie what are the main sources of advice now? Do agencies collaborate in providing services?

What modes of delivery are there to suit the various stages (ie pre-entry, ongoing and pre-exit) of an adults educational 'career'?

The mode of delivery can be viewed as dimensions such as level of **personal contact** and of **autonomy** of the person seeking educational guidance. The most intensive level of guidance is often face-to-face interviews and then perhaps responses to telephone inquiries. Less intensive approaches are through standard published information such as prospectuses or induction packs used in distance learning. Individuals can work fairly autonomously to obtain advice or be more dependent on an expert to guide them through decision making about their educational future. For example some computer based guidance systems can be accessed by an individual seeking advice whereas others are mediated by a

professional. Many agencies use a mixture of presenting a range of information that an individual can draw on as well as providing interviews which can support the process.

What are the resource implications of different kinds of provision?

What are the short and long-term resource issues relevant to the various modes of provision? Creating a 'climate of support' (such as surroundings attractive to adults and staff development opportunities) impinges on resource issues. The overlap of cost and effectiveness was apparent from the beginning. For example, quality provision with high levels of one-to-one and client-centred guidance are more expensive to set up and run than, say, guidance literature packs. Nevertheless, is increasing costs necessarily associated with increased effectiveness? What is initially seen as 'costly' quality provision could well be cheaper in the long run. Another measure of effectiveness could be whether the way guidance is offered educates adults to be more effective in the future.

How effective is the advice from different kinds of provision in the opinion of the users and providers?

As costs only become meaningful in relation to the effectiveness of the guidance service provided, can effectiveness be gauged in ways relevant to the variety of provision and user needs? From the users' point of view, one dimension has to be ease of access to guidance services. The provider may be more concerned with targeting particular groups perceived as likely to benefit from educational guidance than providing guidance in a form that is accessible to a wide range of potential clients.

Is the guidance provided in an appropriate form and level to suit the users' needs? User satisfaction with services which are independent, client-centred services compared with those which form part of the overall provision by educational institutions or private organisations may be as much a feature of individual user preferences as of the provision itself. The heterogeneity of potential clients will influence provision, effectiveness and client satisfaction. What are the characteristics of the effective user of guidance? Presumably there has to be a match between certain characteristics and the nature of provision. We felt it necessary to recognise dimensions such as demographic characteristics of clients including age, gender, ethnicity, level of educational attainment and socio-economic status of clients. Some clients will be clear about their intended goals and may even have identified possible/probable courses of action. Others will have little idea of the scope of educational opportunity or even of what they would like to do even if they knew it existed. Familiarity with guidance services will also vary among clients from those who are making a first nervous enquiry to those who have gone through at least one cycle of pre-, ongoing and pre-exit guidance and are looking for the next stage of their educational development. This is not to say that by merely going through a part of the educational system, adults become familiar with guidance services. It is possible that some people emerge from many months or even years of study without having had or wanted any formal educational guidance beyond what arose during the normal teaching and learning interchanges they experienced.

Method

In order to illuminate these kinds of issues addressed by the research questions, this guidance study has three strands of inquiry, each reflecting the main aims of the research. These strands are:

Strand 1 An overview of what guidance is available for adults in Scotland, building on the work of Docherty (1991).

Strand 2 An in-depth analysis of six case studies of providers of guidance, selected to represent a range of provision and aspects of good practice. The areas of interest will consist mainly of their policies and practices; resource implications; effectiveness of guidance and general issues relating to adult guidance.

Strand 3 A survey of adults focusing on the experiences of users of different kinds of educational guidance.

Strand 1: Existing guidance provision

It was necessary at the beginning of the project to establish an overview of guidance provision in Scotland and to gain a longitudinal view of guidance developments. Besides carrying out a conventional literature review, the research team commissioned Docherty to bring up to date her earlier work for the Scottish Institute of Adult and Continuing Education (SIACE) reported in Local Educational Guidance Services for Adults in Scotland, SIACE 1988, and A Survey of the Provision of Guidance for Adults in Scotland and updated in March 1991, but, unpublished. This review of provision as at April 1992 was an essential preliminary to selecting a small number of case studies for more detailed scrutiny of educational guidance provision and informed Chapter 1 of this report.

In this first strand of the study Docherty was able to provide a longitudinal perspective by following up those providers and organisations contacted in her earlier work. (See Appendix 1) These were designated individuals in Regional and Islands Authorities and selected specialist national agencies, as well as a range of agencies with guidance responsibilities Well-established private agencies were also included. (For the list of the agencies contacted see Appendix 1). In addition to following up those providers and organisations included in the 1988 and 1991 surveys, it was important to take account of new organisations such as the Local Enterprise Companies (LECs) and Scottish Enterprise who were also contacted.

To collect updated information, Docherty contacted providers and conducted a fairly unstructured telephone or face to face interview aimed at highlighting any changes in provision and activities since her 1991 survey. The areas of discussion covered:

- background information about the organisation
- the current situation in the organisation's geographical area/region
- what guidance for adults, if any, was provided by the organisation and, in particular, what changes have occurred in provision since March 1991
- funding of guidance for adults

- staffing and management of the guidance services
- development of guidance provision
- forms of delivery of guidance and the targeting of particular groups

In addition to the interviews, information about adult educational guidance in Scotland was acquired by attending meetings of, for example, guidance associations, as well as following the progress of Adult Learners Week in March 1992.

The internal report of this brief survey was organised in the following sections:

A: Where do adults seek guidance?

B: State of provision of guidance for adults by region and islands authorities as at March 1991.

C: What guidance is offered - including developments in guidance provision up to March 1992?

D: Some examples of good practice in the delivery of guidance for adults.

In summary, the SCRE survey updated Docherty's earlier studies, which had used fairly unstructured interviews and discussions to highlight the changes which had occurred since 1991 to obtain a current assessment of the extent and pattern of adult educational guidance in Scotland. This report was complemented by the HMI Report *The Education of Adults in Scotland* (1992), which provides an overview of the current state of adult education in Scotland. The HMI report includes a chapter specifically focusing on adult guidance.

Strand 2: In-depth case studies of seven providers

Once we had a rough map of the existing organisations which provided educational guidance, it was possible to identify a small number of providers for more detailed scrutiny. The purpose of this part of the research was to gain a rounded view of different kinds of guidance provision.

Sample

The initial main criterion for selecting case study sites was to be whether or not they were examples of good practice and represented a reasonable geographical spread. This was quickly reconsidered partly as we had little access to evidence about the quality of guidance provision at this stage of the project and also because it would have been inequitable to have selected our few cases from the large numbers of reputable providers on the basis of hearsay. It also became obvious from the literature review and other work in Strand 1 that there were other important differences between providers and between clients that should be taken into account in choosing which providers would together reflect educational guidance in Scotland. The factors that finally determined the range of cases were:

The level of education concerned. Guidance could be offered or sought at various levels with the kind of advice requiring specialist knowledge. For example adult basic education, vocational qualifications, entry into higher education and post graduate work call on different sectors of education and training.

The stage at which clients were seeking guidance. Was it at the point of pre-entry or even pre-application for a formal course of study, during the course or pre-exit when contemplating employment or further study?

The mode of delivery. The richness in variety of provision identified in the preliminary work of the project showed that guidance could be offered face to face, over the telephone, with the help of computers or in documents. It could be, for example, a service to individuals or a group who might be on a course, working alongside a guidance worker or proceeding autonomously.

Location of delivery. Besides factors such as geographical spread and the rural/urban dimension, the specific location could vary considerably. In some instances educational guidance could be offered at the work place as part of ongoing career development or as a service offered by the organisation. Facilities could be spread throughout the country such as within FE colleges. They could have a centralised information base with distant access or even provide a mobile outreach programme.

Publicly or privately funded. This links with access. Private organisations such as a company would fund the service but probably allow access only to employees. Public services would have government or regional financing, possibly supplemented by client contributions.

The users. Are clients the general public or are they restricted to a target population such as employees, women returners on a course, long-term unemployed?

Each of these factors were taken into account in obtaining a large list of potential cases, our sample, from which we could select our final group. The advice of members of the Project Advisory Committee was also used in finally deciding which seven providers of guidance for adults to include in the study. We must also be aware that there were other excellent providers that could not be covered within the budget of our project. Therefore, our sample consisted of educational guidance provided by the following:

- Regional guidance service
- Devolved regional guidance service (including telephone helpline and drawing heavily on IT)
- Training Access Point (TAP) Agency
- Employer-based educational guidance
- National distance learning, guidance and advice services
- FE college guidance service
- WEA taught guidance course 'Options and Choices'

Collection of information

Each provider was in a unique situation and the researchers deemed it would be more informative to identify the factors and issues pertinent to each provider rather than to prejudge these and present them in the form of a standard questionnaire. Face to face interviews enabled the researchers to be flexible to the individual situation and both to cover a wide range of topics and to pursue some

areas in depth. Key personnel were initially sent a short list of descriptive questions to answer (See Appendix 2). These replies provided a starting point to individual in-depth, semi-structured interview schedules (Appendix 3).

In some instances, issues arising in the initial interviews were clarified and extended in subsequent telephone discussions between the researchers and the original informants.The duration of the initial interviews was approximately two hours. Most providers also had documentation about their service in the form of brochures or guidelines for clients which contributed to the analysis.

Collation and analysis

The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Researchers read through the transcripts to establish categories for analysis which were then completed on matrices which allowed the categories to be arranged to cover the main research question areas. These main areas of analysis were: providers' policies, their practices, factors affecting the centre's provision, the effectiveness of guidance, the future development of guidance centres and the wider guidance context.

In summary, in Strand 2 the researchers compiled dossiers of detailed information about seven different educational guidance services by interviewing providers and obtaining written information and documents.

Strand 3: Survey of adults who have received guidance

At this point we had a broad overview of educational guidance services in Scotland and the views of providers on the services they offer. Strand 3 aimed to report on clients' satisfaction with the guidance they received and to provide insights on what adults saw as effective guidance provision. It also provided an opportunity to compare perceptions of clients with those of their providers.

Sample

The survey focused on the experiences of 200 adults who had used various types of educational guidance. The sample of adults was obtained from those providers who had helped us with Strand 2 of the project (in-depth case studies of providers). It was felt that this would allow us to examine examples of innovative guidance provision from both the providers' and the adult clients' perspectives. The providers identified clients in one of two ways. They either supplied us with the names and telephone numbers of clients to whom we then sent letters requesting their co-operation, or the providers forwarded our literature to their clients, who then could return the reply slip indicating whether they were willing to help.All clients were, therefore self-selecting. They were also users of professional educational guidance. This study did not explore the views of people who had unsuccessfully tried to use guidance services nor why some people never felt the need to draw on educational guidance facilities.

Collection of information

Structured telephone interviews were used to collect the data. As we wanted to contact a fairly large number of users of guidance dispersed across the country, face-to-face interviews would have been too costly and difficult logistically. Telephoning was economical on time, especially as the informants were spread

all over Scotland and it was difficult to guarantee that the first contact address or telephone number was up to date. We also had used this method very successfully in the past. The number of completed interviews was 158, a completion rate of 79% (see Appendix 4 for a complete breakdown of responses). For five respondents who did not have a telephone but who indicated that they wished to participate in the survey, postal versions of the questionnaire were used. Once contact was established with informants, they usually acceded to the request and once the telephone interview began only three people stopped it before the interview was complete.

Collation and analysis

The completed questionnaires were coded and the data were transferred to computer disc and analysed using SPSS. Initial, descriptive findings reflected the sections of the questionnaires and were summarised under the following headings:

- How the clients find out about the providers
- Referrals
- What people wanted information and advice on
- Modes of delivery and guidance
- Overall satisfaction with the guidance provision
- Standards of guidance
- Wider benefits of guidance
- Previous contact with other providers of guidance
- Client characteristics

Interesting variables were then cross tabulated and also compared with the providers' comments on the same issues. Clients of the services identified in Strand 2 were interviewed by telephone to identify their expectations and experiences of educational guidance facilities. Their levels of satisfaction and criteria for standards of guidance were compared with providers comments on similar issues. Copies of all research instruments are available from SCRE upon request.

Guidance seminars

After the main fieldwork and preliminary analysis were completed we invited providers to a one day seminar at SCRE. This gave us an opportunity to test out our analysis and to explore further issues identified by these informants when they met together.

3 Factors affecting the provision of guidance

In this chapter we look at the seven guidance providers who formed our case studies. The main aim of this chapter is to examine how these providers, selected from many providers identified as *examples of good practice' (details* of our sample selection are given in Chapter 2), provide good guidance and cope with the often external factors which can constrain or threaten their services. We place an emphasis on identifying the common themes and interesting examples which highlight the important processes in providing good guidance. In particular, this chapter identifies key factors which influence providers' guidance services.

Detailed summaries of the providers in our case studies can be found at the end of this chapter. The summaries cover the main characteristics of each case study provider and a corresponding elaboration of their policies, actual guidance provision, funding and likely future developments. These accounts also highlight any salient issues which the providers identified as affecting the services they can offer. We encourage readers to look at the summaries first to get a feel for the providers as the discussion which follows has pulled out the main points to emerge from the case studies rather than obscure these findings within a presentation of the descriptive account of the providers. However, we have also included a table overleaf which summarises the main characteristics of the case-studies for quick reference and allows comparisons to be made between them. We present this table overleaf.

External factors affecting provision

Before looking in detail at the guidance providers and how they go about delivering good guidance, we set out the external factors which they see as affecting and sometimes threatening their services. While the range of providers our project covered was quite diverse, there was much consensus on the main types of external factors which affected them. These were:

- the funding and resources available to the provider
- the physical geography the provider has to operate in
- the existence of other services and organisations to network with
- changes in client needs
- external policy directives

Funding and resources

Funding and resources are always the main factors affecting any services. Educational guidance providers point out three resource factors they have to deal with: the actual amount of core funding, its reliability or steadiness and then the additional funding that can be elicited or raised to extend the services offered. While all of the providers in our study had relatively steady funding to date, in

Table 2: Summary Characteristics of the case study sample

Characteristics	*Case study A*	*Case study B*	*Case study C*	*Case study D*	*Case study E*	*Case study F*	*Case study G*
Purpose	To provide a region-wide network of adult educ guidance access points, using IT and free-phone guidance help-line	To provide guidance for employees as part of the company's educational programme	To provide pre-entry, ongoing, induction, and pre-exit guidance for students and potential students.	The guidance is an intrinsic part of the overall educational system at the pre-entry, ongoing and pre-exit stages	To provide guidance on education and training opportunities for adults in the region. Emphasis on long-term unemployed	To increase awareness of the range of training opportunities and to promote the uptake of training	The taught guidance course for women returners to realise their potential
Policy	The service has regional guidelines with specific formalised policies which are annually reviewed	There are no formal written policies. The guidance is seen as an integral part of the company's educational programme	Informal policy. Practice based on basic written principles using UDACE definitions	No formal policy, rather a set of procedures exist for each stage of the student's educational experience. Guided by ethos of client-centredness	Formal explicit policy in annual report and prospectus including reference to UDACE definitions	Formal written policies set down at UK level, but also introduced own regional policies. Annually reviewed	There is no formal written policy on guidance. Practice guided by ethos of client-centredness
Nature of guidance	Broad scope but in-depth guidance and suited to clients' needs. All UDACE activities involved	Information and advice on educational opportunities and referral to FE and HE providers	Broad scope but in-depth guidance. Content suited to clients needs can cover pre-entry on-going and pre-exit in-depth guidance. All UDACE activities involved	Broad scope but in-depth guidance. Content suited to clients needs can cover pre-entry on-going and pre-exit in-depth guidance. All UDACE activities involved	Broad scope but in-depth guidance and suited to clients' needs. All UDACE activities involved	Broad *vocational* scope, detailed information on vocational and training courses. Backup advisory service for users. All UDACE activities involved	Intensive guidance course aimed at developing adults potential. All UDACE activities involved
Location	Multi site with central control initially	One site	One site	Multi site	Multi site with central policy back up local autonomy	Multi site with central control	One site
Clients	Individuals	Individuals	Individuals	Individuals/ groups	Individuals and groups. Emphasis on long term unemployed	Individuals	Cohort of students
Geographical range	Region-wide	Travelling distance	Travelling distance	UK and Scottish nationwide	Region-wide	Nationwide but regionwide case study	Travelling distance

Mode of delivery	Computer-assisted Face-to-face Telephone Literature	Face-to-face Literature	Face-to-face Telephone Literature	Face-to-face Telephone Literature Group work	Discussion groups/plus literature Telephone Face-to-face	Computer-assisted Telephone Face-to-face	Taught course Group class work Individual counselling
Access	Open to all	Closed. Restricted to employees	Open but mainly for potential and actual students	Pre-entry open; ongoing, pre-exit. Restricted to students	Open to all	Open – self-service	Restricted students
Cost to user	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free	Free
Accountability	Regional Education Dept but fairly autonomous	Head Office but Education Manager has high level of autonomy	College Depute Director	The Scottish Director at the education service in the Admin HQ	Regional Council via Careers Service	Principle Regional Careers Officer LEC also requires report. Fairly high level of autonomy	Regional WEA
Funding	Funded by the regional education department. Also some attempt at income generation and funds from special initiatives, eg TVEI	There is no specific funding for guidance. The overall Education Programme budget pays for the services of the Education Manager and all necessary information	There is no direct budget for guidance in the college at present. Funding comes to the college from the local authority and is then allocated as seen fit by the Director and Depute Director (funding mechanism due to change soon and involve cost centres)	The overall educational service receives a grant from the DES. From this the Scottish part of the service can decide how best to allocate money including what proportion will be used for guidance services	55% Regional Council (core funding). 45% European Social Fund (ESF). Additional minor amount self-generated.	LEC Regional Council Some European Social Fund (ESF) The agency generates about 3-7% of its income	Multiple sources. LEC is the main source of funding for this particular course. Some regional funding via Community Education Service. SOED funding has decreased over time. European Social Fund (ESF) provides some funding

most cases the funding was seen as limited to providing a core service with little allowance for growth which could develop the service to meet clients' needs more effectively or to reach new groups seen as needing guidance:

> *We've been fairly steady, but we're facing a standstill budget for next year, which is effectively a cut, there's no increase for inflation, staff costs and so on. But generally we've been fairly steady.*

In some cases additional income generated by the providers themselves, for example, by charging a minimal fee to employers for advice or information, can be the only way to resource small initiatives or more commonly, additional guidance materials.

Where guidance was provided as part of a wider educational service, we found that there was no specific budget for the guidance. The funding of the guidance in these case studies was dependent on the institutional/organisational policy and the guidance personnel's powers of persuasion. For example, departments sponsored to attend educational and training programmes negotiated by the Educational and Training Manager of the employment-based service in Case study B. He had no separate budget but the company guaranteed his salary. In the case of further education this looks set to change as the colleges use formula funding and move out of local authority control.

While funding in many cases is associated with uncertainty, none of our providers thought their 'core' funding would disappear in the near future. However, most of them feel that the necessary increase in their funding to maintain the same standard of service is far more uncertain. For example the TAP case study revealed that having annually to justify the service to the funder, ie the LEC had implications for long-term planning:

> *It's always been a one year funding. I think that's quite common within the guidance world, especially if you have any kind of external funding such as LEC or European social funding, you find yourself doing annual funding requests. Obviously that's a problem because it doesn't allow you to do any long term planning. Its hard to have a three-year or a five-year strategy when you know that in nine months time you'll be seeing if you can get funding to carry on for the next year... it means that towards the end of a financial year you have to rein in any new initiatives you might be involved in and carry on with the main provision.*
>
> TAP Manager

Our providers feel uneasy about building up aspects of a service and with it client demand, only to have to remove this guidance if the funding was reduced. Disillusioned and dissatisfied clients can tarnish the image of a provider in the community. The WEA provider stressed this point:

> *It's important to have sustained growth, not just piloting then getting out again. There's no point in raising expectations, then just leaving. In a way, you're worse off.*
>
> Tutor-organiser

The vagaries of short-term funding are also seen by the providers as having an effect on staff morale. Again, the TAP case study illustrated this particularly clearly:

> *one thing you do find with annual funding reviews is that staff morale gets edgy towards the end of a financial year, people get anxious -"will I have a job next year", that is very tricky to deal with. You find that, towards the end of a financial year some*

people will move on. Nearly every TAP I know has had wide variations in their funding, one year they're doing well, the next year they're cut and the next its back up again. So, of course that has an effect on staff who are concerned about their future.

TAP Manager

Sometimes the apparent funders of guidance providers are, themselves, restricted in the amount of financial support they can give. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the regional councils with their own budgets facing restrictions and with many demands on their funds. The WEA case study illustrates how some of the funding has, in effect, filtered down to them from sources which are under considerable pressure to reduce costs and which also face an uncertain future:

We're funded quite generously from the Region, through community education, but their resources are limited. It's not a big population base and there are more and more voluntary organisations even within adult education wanting a piece of the cake. We hope to hold our own; we can't expect big advances. With all the uncertainties within the local authority scene, you can't put too much pressure on them at the moment. Basically there's been a drop in SOED support, so it just means that there's less and less and less coming from the centre and more and more that it's up to us to raise. So your local authority gives what it can.

Tutor-organiser

With short-term funding being a common feature of educational guidance, providers have to make awkward choices such as whether to implement innovations when the funding for them might disappear later.

The FE guidance service case study identified a need for pre-access guidance which would inform and advise adults in the community about access courses and how to go about gaining entry to the college. However, this was constrained by finances:

We actually have quite a few people, that we've not been able to do anything about because of the funding. They're not able to do courses, but if we could give them the support for so long and pre-access to courses it would help them. The problem is the funding.

Head of Student Services

Some providers who have to report annually on how their services have performed can put forward a case to their funders for additional finance to support an expansion of their services such as targeting certain clients or new modes of delivery to increase the effectiveness of the service. However, more often the provider has to concentrate on securing another year of core funding. The limits imposed on guidance providers in terms of expanding to meet potential demand is given as a major reason for their lack of enthusiasm in publicising their services more widely than they do. As we shall see, this is perhaps the only criteria of quality guidance our providers deliberately choose to avoid. Funds may be available from special initiatives such as TVEI which the Regional service in Case study I was able to exploit. Some activities from their service were sponsored by industry.

Local geography

Providers with clients who are sparsely distributed over large rural areas will have to consider different ways of delivering a service to clients concentrated in

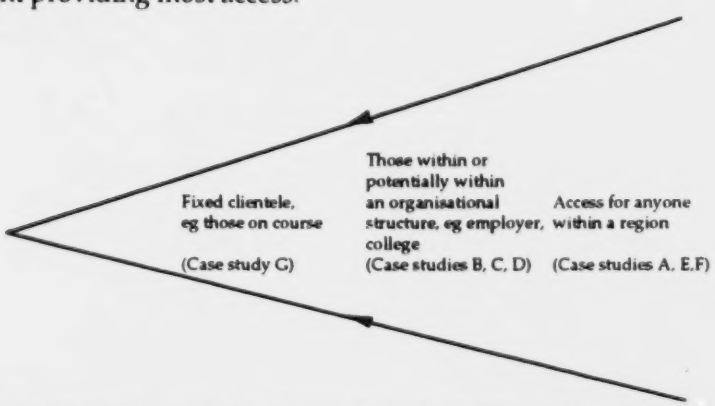
one locality. Measures to reach clients in widely distributed geographical areas will also have resource implications given the costs and time incurred in travelling by providers. This can be balanced against the potential lack of access clients in rural areas may have.

Some providers have responsibilities to clients in towns and those who are dispersed over rural areas. Educational Guidance providers have responded imaginatively to such challenges and have adopted strategies appropriate to the clients and to this age of information technology. Computers can provide access to clients and support for professionals. The regional guidance providers in our study, and one of the educational providers had tailored aspects of their guidance delivery to deal with such geographical factors. In dealing with their clients in out-lying areas providers (in Case studies A, D, E and F) use outreach, mobile guidance staff visiting host sites on specific days; utilise staff and resources at educational and other guidance providers across the region; have rural centres with part-time staff who are also 'active' in the community; and make available free telephone helplines. Interestingly, a form of outreach is used by these same providers to reach targeted clients in urban areas who do not traditionally respond to forms of guidance such as (drop-in, advertisement and literature).

Client demand

Our choice of case studies deliberately ranged over small scale operations (eg Case study G) to those who dealt with thousands of clients annually. One difficulty is for providers to identify 'a client' as the services requested and provided could vary from a single phone call or accessing a computer terminal for information to a series of interactions (eg telephone call, posting information, face-to-face interviews) with the same client. Taking providers' records, the larger provider (Case study A) deals with over 50,000 inquiries via various access points. Taught courses (Case study G) which provide educational guidance take about 100-150 students per year.

Identifying the clients has another dimension to it – identifying the principle target group. This reveals differences in openness balanced by degrees of personal contact or thoroughness in the guidance that can be given. A diagrammatic representation of these levels of openness to clients could be as follows with those on the right providing most access.


Fixed clientele, eg those on course
(Case study G)
Those within or potentially within an organisational structure, eg employer, college
(Case studies B, C, D)
Access for anyone within a region
(Case studies A, E,F)

This could be misleading if one considers other dimensions of access. One of the regional providers (F) requires clients to be computer literate, as information is conveyed through terminals located in public places. Being able to study in

some depth at the college down the road (G) could give excellent access to another client. Access has to be related not just to the kinds of needs that clients have for guidance. It also has to take account of the various communication skills they may or may not have. Educational guidance services are generally trying to be responsive to client needs.

In a context of rapid social and economic change, a provider can face sudden changes in the types of client approaching them when the main remit of the service is to provide guidance for other groups. This can place the provider under pressure, and unless there are clear referral systems to cope with such adults or an increase in funding, the provider has to consider how to meet the demand, usually within their existing resources. One regional guidance service faced just such a situation.

> *The main client group is the long-term unemployed. We could continue quite happily seeing people who are in employment or changing jobs. Demand from that group is increasing and we're really trying to keep a balance and we really go out and try to market ourselves with long-term unemployed. That will be more important in the coming year, we're going to have to try to maintain a particular ratio of employed to unemployed, because of the funding from Europe, because that* [the long-term unemployed] *would be their priority groups.... If it came to the stage that we had to review* [our] *policy, then long-term unemployed, women returners, those who have been made recently redundant or about to be made redundant would come ahead of people in employment or changing jobs.*
>
> Adult guidance co-ordinator

This situation can obviously create a dilemma for providers. No provider would willingly consider turning 'non-priority' groups away. When the policy is next revised the remit might be formally broadened to include other groups of clients. However, this again would depend on whether the provider could get the necessary resources, staff and funding for the development. As we shall see networking is one way of ameliorating such pressures.

Networks

All of the providers in the study said that being a member of an active guidance network was one of the most powerful ways to expand their individual services to meet the diverse needs of clients. By referring adults on to more suitable sources of guidance or obtaining relevant information from other providers they could deal more effectively with a wider range of clients' needs. In particularly effective examples of networks, they can operate as one large, devolved guidance service within a region. One of the regional guidance services highlighted the benefits of such a system.

> *It's a bit patchy, but some of it's very good, where we're getting people from careers, colleges, community education plus OU, the local university, libraries, training providers and the WEA joining the network to see if they can share the resources, common aims or marketing exercises etc and it's working well.*
>
> Adult Guidance Manager

There was some variance in the complexity and dynamism of the various networks identified in the study (ie case studies A, E and F were more active than the others – see summary sheets at the end of this chapter). But all of these networks were valued by the providers and there was a commitment to develop them further. One provider stressed the need for collaboration and co-ordination between guidance providers in an area.

You've got to be co-ordinated, or it's confusing for the public and a waste of resources.

Tutor-organiser

External policy directives

By external policy directives we mean policies, remit or directions which are 'imposed' on a provider by some external organisation, agency or institution to which the provider is accountable. Such organisations can include funders, head offices based in other services (ie regional careers service) and regional councils. While all of the providers in the study are largely autonomous, to some extent all of them can be seen to have some external policy input or directives from other organisations influencing their remit and provision. However, three of the seven providers have more explicit external policy directives imposed upon them, these are the two regional guidance services, and the TAP agency. In the case of the regional guidance services, it is the regional careers service and regional education department and ultimately the regional council; in the case of the TAP it is the regional careers service and the LEC. In the case of the TAP agency we looked at, the main funder is the LEC. The Agency stresses that, to date, the LEC has been supportive of guidance which supports individuals and businesses in the region. In such a context the TAP Agency has introduced innovations which augment the core remit and serve individuals and businesses. However, the influence of the LEC is considerable:

...the LEC...they are our main funders, so if they wanted to take us off in a certain direction they could.

TAP Agency Manager

Some providers have a number of funders and each can affect the remit of the provider, for example, one of the regional guidance services received some funding from the European Social Fund (ESF). So in addition to meeting the remit set down by the region, the ESF also influenced their policies on guidance.

These, then, are the main external factors and context affecting the guidance providers. All of the providers we looked at were affected by the factors we have highlighted and discussed. Some providers are more 'vulnerable' to certain external influences than others, these are usually those with funding which is from multiple sources and/or annually reviewed. Given this environment of external influences, how have the providers in our case studies delivered good guidance? What organisational features have they developed to provide guidance in uncertain and sometimes hostile external conditions? We look now at these organisational features which, while shaped by the external factors, can be seen as 'internal factors' which also affect the guidance they provide.

Organisational features and internal factors affecting guidance provision

We have seen how a range of common external influences can affect guidance providers. Largely in response to these influences the providers have evolved organisational features to provide good guidance. We have identified three main organisational features or areas which can influence the guidance they provide and can be seen as 'internal factors'. These are:

- policy or remit of provision;
- actual guidance provision and delivery;
- monitoring and evaluation of provision;

While the providers we looked at faced similar types of external influences on their services, not all had responded to them in the same way. This is because the precise nature of each of these influences varied from provider to provider and shaped their particular organisational features accordingly. So, what variance was there across the providers in these features or areas and how were they seen by the providers as helping to provide good guidance?

Policy and remit of provision

In terms of whether providers have formal written policies, we found that across the providers in the study a 'spectrum' of formality of policy structure exists.

Level of structure in guidance policies

---------->----------->---------->----------

No formal written policy	Basic policy/general aims	Formal written policies
WEA taught guidance course (Case study G)	FE College guidance service (on-going and pre-exit) (Case study C)	Regional guidance service (Case study E)
Employer based educational guidance (Case study B)	National distance learning, guidance and advice services (on-going and pre-exit) (Case study D)	'Devolved' regional guidance service (Case study A)
		TAP agency (Case study F)
		FE College guidance service (pre-entry) (Case study C)
		National distance learning, guidance and advice services (pre-entry) (Case study D)

---------> **reactive** ----------->----------->**proactive**--------->

The factors which shape whether or not the providers possess formal policies seem to be:

- a desire to provide quality guidance, which can be measured against set standards and targets
- the remit of the provider is strongly shaped by funding bodies which 'impose' explicit policies against which the service can be accountable

We found that providers which have been set up specifically as adult guidance services (eg Case studies A, E and F), with regional and/or LEC backing are more likely to have formal guidance policies in written form, and often these are integrated into development plans. Also, as we shall see, they are more likely to have more systematic monitoring and evaluation and tend to be more proactive as a service.

How did the providers themselves feel about possessing formal guidance policies? Did they see them as a necessary prerequisite for providing good guidance? Some of the providers felt that having few formal policies had worked reasonably well:

> *I don't think* [this] *District, ...has anything written. .. So no, but we've got a general interest and belief because we've always felt allied to* [principles of good guidance]... *That's what motivates us rather than anything formal.*
>
> Tutor-organiser (Case study G)

> *We don't work to the letter, we respond to need. If we wrote it now, it would be vastly different, because we're expanding into new areas and being more proactive.*
>
> Head of FE college student support services

The second quote implies that having few formal policies means the provider can be more flexible. But is this always so? Another provider who had formal policies felt that the policies did not necessarily limit their practice or prevented them implementing innovations:

> *There's the national policy in terms of provision of training information which is comprehensive and accurate, and we've added our own regional policy to link* [us] *into guidance and to provide back-up advice and guidance to users*
>
> Tap agency manager

Another provider with formal policies was enthusiastic about how they added structure, standardisation and quality to the overall regional guidance in which the service played a key part:

> *The ... service has always had extremely explicit instructions on guidance. As an authority we've got regional guidelines. Then each division then interprets that to match its own resources etc. Every college* [in the region] *is required to state its policies and objectives regarding guidance and* [we] *feature in every one of those. We only give bursaries to students on full -time courses, where there is a guidance element attached to that course in terms of our modules. Which student is going to go on a course where they're not getting a bursary? So they're going to be saying to the college 'where are the guidance modules?'. The colleges will have to build in guidance modules in order to attract students.*
>
> *In terms of strategic policies and guidelines, we've done what we can to embed guidance in the system. We also support pre-entry guidance modules, induction, ongoing guidance, pre-exit. Once we have it embedded in the...system, its not just going to affect the students, because along with all the staff development we've talked about, you're embedding a guidance culture, so they then begin to deliver that guidance to those who pop into their advice shops.*
>
> Adult education guidance co-ordinator (Case study A)

So here we have a provider who is part of a regional guidance strategy and their policies are quite specific. These policies have been used to ensure that guidance for adults is provided at a certain standard throughout all levels of public education in the region.

We did find some evidence that the lack of formal policy can have a negative effect on the guidance provision. One person felt that their organisation was limited by a lack of clear formal policies on guidance:

> *It's* [guidance and counselling] *always been insecure, it's lacked confidence and my own personal view is that it hasn't developed an orthodoxy of practice, where it's firmly rooted in a clear-cut rationale, that it has a philosophical underpinning of aims and objectives, of generic ways of achieving these that have been tried and tested and validated. I think we operate far too much at an anecdotal level, not deriving practice from a principle which exemplifies a particular approach. The difficulties that has engendered has downgraded the provision and the professionalism of the service and I would think we have a long way to go on that.*
>
> Senior tutor-counsellor (Case study D)

On balance, it would appear that possessing formal policies does not necessarily constrain a provider, indeed, such policies can appear to ensure that standards are maintained throughout the service. We have also seen that the absence of formal policies can have implications for the 'professionalism' of the service. However, there is one proviso to add to the positive aspects of formal policies. We mentioned earlier that formal policies are often more common where there is some imposition from another aspect of the educational service or funding body. As we saw in the section on external factors affecting guidance services, the nature, direction and standards set down in such policies can rely on the values of these external bodies. It is possible that such values and views on the purposes of educational guidance held by external bodies will not always correspond to those widely recognised as being good guidance and reflecting the needs of clients. Fortunately there was no evidence of this our case studies.

We look now at the actual guidance provision to examine how providers attempt to provide good guidance and also whether policy, either structured or unstructured, affects the practice and delivery of guidance.

Guidance provision and delivery

The first thing to note is that, generally, the content and modes of guidance provision in our case study providers is very diverse. This can be seen in the summaries of the providers at the end of this chapter. The actual forms of delivery are seen by the providers as being the best response to clients needs given the range of constraints the providers face. All of our providers claimed to undertake the seven UDACE guidance activities, although the priority given to each varies from provider to provider. For example the, 'Options and Choices' course provided by the WEA (Case study G) is a fairly rare example of provision which systematically seeks to *enable* adults to be more independent.

The guidance provision, while varying across the providers, is shaped by three main and common factors. These are:

- the purpose of the guidance
- the needs of the clients
- the constraints and pressures outwith the provider's control, eg finances.

These factors can be seen as belonging to those external influences which shape provision and which have been discussed earlier in this chapter. These include the purpose of the guidance which, as we have seen, can be determined by external bodies and ideally the clients themselves.

In addition to these factors, aspects of the service such as the skills and qualities of guidance personnel, their perceptions and resulting decisions do play a role in shaping the actual guidance provision of providers. These can be seen as *internal* factors, however, even these can be influenced by external factors. For example, the recruitment of skilled staff can have financial implications.

One provider we looked at, Case study E, provides a good example of how the skills and qualities of the staff can affect the ability of the service to provide good guidance. This provider has a regional responsibility for adult guidance, yet the number of staff available to it are limited. This means that the staff have to have a very good knowledge of what opportunities exist for adults in the region. As it is unlikely their knowledge will be inexhaustible, they also have to know about the regional guidance network and how best to use it. As the remit of this

particular service is region-wide and places an emphasis on disadvantaged groups in priority areas, the guidance staff have to be able to travel around these areas and set-up local initiatives and network with other professionals in the area.

The qualities of guidance staff are seen by all of the providers as pivotal to the quality of the guidance provision, as the Regional Adult Educational Guidance Co-ordinator stresses:

> *Experience and personality is so important and we feel we've been quite successful in being able to identify them*
>
> Adult Educational Guidance Co-ordinator

Obviously, staff recruitment policies and possessing sufficient funds to recruit enough skilled staff influence the staff make-up of particular providers and therefore affect, to some extent, the quality and extent of their guidance.

The perceptions of key guidance personnel can also play a role in shaping the delivery of the guidance. We found that this is more likely to happen where such staff have a high level of autonomy and can greatly determine most practical aspects of the service. For example, the head of the further education college student support services' (Case study C) own feelings about what types of guidance are most suitable and appropriate for students directly shape the nature of the service.

> *Our perception was that guidance wasn't separate from counselling, but was an umbrella term... We've always tried to have our own idea of what guidance is for us. Other colleges may differ and use different terms, but everyone is trying to make students more self-aware, more self-reliant. Computerisation of guidance as a substitute for one-to-one contact with adults is worrying. With adults, because of their lack of confidence, their insecurity and coming back to something that they might have failed earlier, the friendly face and atmosphere is more important than all these computerised things.*
>
> Head of the further education college student support services

The relationship between policy and practice

We found that, in general, each providers' practice, in terms of scope, content, and where appropriate target groups, reflects the aims set down in whatever policies or remit (formal or informal) they have. Where providers have formal written policies it is easier to see whether their provision is following the purpose or remit of the organisation. One can use the explicit aims and targets to compare against what is actually happening in practice.

Usually, some aspects of practice more than others are more rigorously tied to policies. For example, if the provider has a remit to provide specific guidance for particular target groups, then priority is placed on this aspect of the service.

In the realistic world of guidance, set in a context of rapid social and economic change, flexibility of provision is very important. Even where there are explicit policies in our case-studies, the provision was not 'strait-jacketed'. The actual practice of the providers can alter within limits (fine-tune), to suit developments. For example, if there is a surge in demand for information and advice from people who are not one the main groups a provider is targeting, attempts will be made to respond to the demand. When the policy is next revised the remit might

be formally broadened to include other groups of clients. However this again depends on whether the provider can get the necessary resources, staff and funding for the development. One clear example we found of this happening was in the TAP agency (Case study F):

> *Based on our research and patterns of usage there is an increased demand from unemployed males aged from about 25-45. That could be a reflection of the things that are happening in society with the recession and redundancies. So it's a group which is increasingly coming to us for help and advice and looking for retraining. Now where we find it difficult to help that group compared to others is in labour market information. What people often say to us is "If I train in that will I get a job at the end of it?" At the moment you can't give any definite answers to that. In fact I've been speaking to the planning department of the regional council, about doing a Labour Market Information (LMI) project for which we would try and get LEC support and funding to try and start to answer some of these questions; what is the labour market in* [the region] *Can we sensibly research it, make decisions about it and answer our clients' questions?*

This example highlights the third and final organisational feature that some of the providers can use to provide good guidance, that of monitoring and evaluation of their service.

Monitoring and evaluation

Again this can be something which is imposed on a provider or it can be independently implemented by them. Whether its origins are external or internal, when it occurs it can shape future practice by informing the service about whether it is meeting its aims, whether there are changes in demand and so on. It has a role in defining how effective the service is and can identify areas which need attention. We will look in more detail at the issue of effective guidance and the role played by monitoring and evaluation in Chapter 6.

We found that only three regional guidance services - Case studies A, E, and F, possess systematic formal evaluation and monitoring of their services. It appears that it is no coincidence that these are the same providers who had the most formal guidance policies and organisational structure. These all use on-going monitoring, research and evaluation systematically to inform and, if necessary, revise policies and practices on an annual basis, or more frequently if necessary. While funders and the region often require this continual monitoring, there is a lot of support for it from providers. These providers feel that such monitoring can be costly in terms of the staff time involved, and sometimes this can place limits on what monitoring can be done, but it is seen as an essential aspect of providing good guidance.

The other case studies used a mixture of quantitative indicators, qualitative indicators, informal feedback, and anecdotal evidence to monitor their provision. These later providers give a variety of reasons for a lack of formal monitoring. For example, the WEA-taught guidance case study keeps no statistics on guidance use and demand but uses constant informal feedback to assess provision. One reason for the lack of a systematic evaluation is that the provider feels that it would need a lot of staff time which is required on other areas. Also it feels that, to date, such evaluation of effectiveness has not been necessary. Qualitative reports from tutors have been sufficient. However, this provider recognises that as funding is increasingly coming from the LECs, accountability is being demanded

from this source, using certain performance indicators and statistics. The desire to monitor effectiveness more systematically is present, but additional money and staff is seen as necessary. They argue that because the service is aimed at adults, people who are attending because they want to , perhaps the best indicator of effectiveness is the continual attendance of the adults. If the service was failing to meet the needs of clients, the adults would leave.

The cases studies which are a part of a wider educational provider - Case studies C and D, while lacking systematic formal monitoring, attempt to use some quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess their services. Statistics on use augment informal word-of-mouth feedback about the service. In Case study D the mix of formal and informal evaluation does feed back into provision. This is easier to do for the more objective areas such as financial support. However, it is more difficult to gather information on and alter tutors' (involved in guidance) interpersonal skills. There are current moves to look at ways of improving tutor skills in guidance and in monitoring their effectiveness.

In the employer-based educational guidance (Case study B), there is no systematic monitoring of the guidance. Monitoring of guidance was not something that had been considered as a separate issue from the rest of the programme but it is something that the Manager feels should be done:

> *We've got to become much better at providing that support, evaluation, monitoring, reviewing etc.*
>
> Education and Training Manager

Indicators of effectiveness of guidance include informal feedback from the shop floor and from managers; the numbers involved in courses; turnover and absenteeism; and whether an employee comes back for further advice. However, the education manager feels these are not systematic enough.

We have seen in this chapter how a range of largely external factors affects and shapes the structure of our providers, their policies, their actual guidance provision and whether they monitor their provision. We have also seen how factors internal to the providers, particularly the skills and qualities of personnel and the attitudes of key staff influence these areas of provision. However, it is worth stressing that even these internal influences on the nature of the guidance providers, services are themselves not always independent of the wider external factors we have identified.

We turn now to the perceptions of the clients themselves to examine what guidance they wanted, whether they feel they got this and what, if any, changes they can suggest to improve the quality of providers' services.

Adult Educational Guidance
Case studies
Summaries

(Quotes in each case study are attributed to the head of the respective guidance provider)

Case study A: Devolved Regional Guidance Service which draws heavily on IT

AIMS

Purpose

To develop and provide a region-wide Network of adult education guidance access points, utilising information technology where appropriate, and supported by a free-phone guidance helpline with computerised database.

Policy

The service is founded on regional guidelines with specific formalised policies on guidance provision using career, community education and FE services. These policies are annually reviewed.

SERVICE

Modes

The modes of delivery cover:

- 260 computerised 'access points' mediated by professionals providing information and advice on education, training and careers opportunities.
- free telephone guidance helpline
- appointments
- annual outreach initiative with mobile systems
- group-work with target groups (eg women returners, ethnic minorities)

Locations

Throughout the Region using every college and careers office, many community education centres, most secondary schools and increasingly HE providers and unemployed workers centres. Each division has portable computer with system updated centrally.

When established

January 1989

Catchment area

Region-wide provision

Accountability

Regional Education Department, but it is fairly autonomous

Networks

One large network using the providers shown above. Other contacts include WEA, OU, universities, libraries and training providers. Encourages development of local networks.

Monitoring effectiveness

Annual review and update using statistics of client use, staff feed-back, user group, some client follow-up and a number of review/steering committees

RESOURCES

Funding

Funded by the regional education department. Also some attempt at income generation and funds from speical initiatives, eg TVEI.

Staff

Core service - 9 full-time, 1 part-time permanent; 2 full-time temporary. Staff in educational providers and other network services.

CLIENTS

1991 - 50,000 dealt with via the various 'access points'
5,500 - applied for courses via the various 'access points'
7,700 clients called the helpline (107 from outside the Region)

Enquiries made by clients are very diverse, covering information/advice on 'non-vocational'/non-accredited courses through to degree and postgraduate courses. Many enquiries are about access courses

Case study A: cont'd

Policy

The service is founded on regional guidelines with specific formalised policies on guidance provision. In turn, the service has feedback policies on good guidance practice into region's education providers.
The service has several key policy objectives:

- to provide a free telephone helpline - giving impartial educational information and advice and referral service and raising interest, aspirations and knowledge.
- to equip each 'access point' with a computer-assisted guidance system which is kept up-to-date on education, training and careers opportunities in the region.
- to actively promote the educational provision made by the region, specifically initiatives such as accreditation of prior learning, wider access, distance learning, open learning.

The service emphasises unbiased guidance, which it fosters in the regions, colleges. While regional guidance policies shape the remit of the Service , the service in turn feeds back information to the region and educational providers which leads to a constant refining and evaluation of guidance policies. The service aims to embed guidance in the system and develop a guidance culture in the region. Difficult initially when much adult educational guidance fairly amateurish. Required staff development initiatives using a cascade approach for technology, training and marketing. Encouraged development of certificate/diploma in adult educational guidance.

Guidance provision

The service undertakes all the UDACE/STAGES activities, concentrating on informing; advising; assessing; teaching (in terms of staff development) enabling; networking; feeding back; and advocating. Pre-entry and pre-exit careers guidance are the main level of guidance provided.

The service is primarily concerned with serving everyone. However, 'women returners' are actively targeted, particularly when outreach and road shows are undertaken. There are moves to target ethnic groups more systematically.

Monitoring continually shapes the actual practice of the Service.

Issues

- The computer-assisted guidance is seen as more user-friendly than other computer guidance systems because clients *and* professional guidance staff together access databases which suit the client's needs. This also ensures that enquiries are genuine. The system allows applications to courses to be made from the terminal; (however) the onus is then on the college to follow up the client, rather than the other way around. Can colleges respond to this challenge?

Resources

The Regional Council has been supportive of the Service and this has allowed it to expand. Core funding and resources are relatively steady, despite general cutbacks in the regional careers service from which budget the Service is funded.

Issues

- Evaluation of the service is undertaken but it is a costly exercise
- Given recent cutbacks in the regional career service, developments need to be shown to be relevant and cost effective
- Insufficient resources to expand regional service to a national scheme.

Future

Future developments are likely to include:

- city-centre based advice shops, with an emphasis on HE and FE representation.
- continual upgrading of guidance software, some of it with the assistance of private industrial sponsorship.
- improvements in the hardware such as CD ROM
- delivery of certificate/diploma course in adult educational guidance
- electronic surveys for monitoring package use.

Issues

- The main factors in implementing further innovations and initiatives are *cash and resources*
- The Service would like to expand nationwide. This would depend on resources but even more on the co-operation of other regions and their providers of education and guidance. How likely such co-operation is remains very uncertain
- How to get better understanding between educational guidance and retention of students.

Case study B: Employer Based Educational Guidance

AIMS

Purpose

The Educational and Training Manager provides guidance for employees as part of the company's educational programme, *Education for All* – each employee to raise level of education by a notch, funded by employer. This involves advising, informing employees in relation to the educational programme and liaising with participating HE and FE providers.

Policy

There are no formal written policies. Rather, the guidance is seen as an integral part of the company's educational programme with the Education and Training Manager's remit including having to provide information and advice to employees to utilise the programme.

SERVICE

Modes

The modes of delivery cover:

- basic information on notice boards, leaflets, literature and company magazine
- drop-in
- appointments
- self-help groups of employees
- education for all, training may be targeted for specific groups

Locations

The Education and Training Manager's office serves as the centre for guidance activities. However, line managers throughout the factory are used to provide basic information and feedback.

When established

Since February 1990 when the Education Programme was implemented

Catchment area

Within the factory and for employees only

Accountability

Head Office, however the Education Manager has a high level of autonomy

Networks

Close links with local FE and HE providers, training consultants

Monitoring effectiveness

There is no systematic, formal monitoring of the effectiveness of the guidance provided, rather informal feedback is used to assess the role of advice in the Programme

RESOURCES

Funding

There is no specific funding for guidance. The overall Education Programme budget pays for the services of the Education Manager and all necessary information.

Staff

One permanent full-time Education and Training Manager. He utilises line-managers within each division to provide a basic guidance role

CLIENTS

In 1990, over 240 employees used the service.

Most common queries were about:

- what courses were available and how to get entry

Case study B: cont'd

Policy

There is no formal policy for guidance provision. Providing information and advice is seen as integral to the role of the Education and Training Officer within his remit of managing the Company's Education Programme. The unions are very supportive of education and training. The importance of guidance is recognised by the Education and Training Manager who hopes to develop a more proactive guidance service.

Issues

- There is some recognition that the service could be more formalised

  We don't have a formal system. It's probably something that we're not as sharp at as we ought to be....I'm not sure we provide the level of guidance I would like...It tends to be reactive rather than proactive.

- However, there are still some doubts about how necessary a formal policy is

  Maybe we do need to do more, but when you write things down, you start to restrict them

- Encouragement for individuals to extend their education can result in unsystematic choice of courses in some cases.

Guidance provision

The Education and Training Manager's guidance activities are usually based on informing, advising, vocational counselling advocacy on behalf of employees in approaching educational providers and basic assessment of employees' abilities and needs in view of the courses they wish to take.

Most of the guidance is provided by the Education and Training Manager on a face-to-face, drop-in or appointment basis. Additional pre-entry and most of the on-course guidance is provided by the educational institutions. Line managers and other employees who are doing the same course as a person seeking guidance can be used to provide advice and information.

Issues

- Because the system uses divisional line-managers, the effectiveness of guidance can be affected by how well-informed they are and their skills in dealing with people. Therefore, line-managers are attending courses to develop their interpersonal training and coaching skills.

- There is a recognition that the monitoring of the effectiveness of guidance is largely informal, based on feedback from the shop floor and managers, the numbers involved on courses, turnover and absenteeism on courses and whether an employee comes back for further advice. The Education and Training Manager hopes to develop a more systematic monitoring of the service he provides.

- The Education and Training Manager feels that a lot of his time is taken up with administrative duties, which, he feels, is not the best use of his time. The service would be more effective if he could spend more time on actual guidance, in particular, working with groups of employees.

- Term 'guidance' not used rather 'information', 'assistance', 'careers advice'. *Guidance smacks of somebody in school who misbehaves, so he gets sent to the guidance teacher.*

Resources

All funding for guidance activities is derived from the overall budget for the Educational Programme. There appear to be no problems with this arrangement at present.

Future

There are plans to have an education centre on site, with training rooms and a 24 hour open-learning facility. This will be staffed by personnel with a responsibility for guidance and day-to-day administration. The Education and Training Manger hopes that this will allow him more time to spend on guidance activities.

Case study C: Further Education College Guidance Service

AIMS

Purpose To provide pre-entry, ongoing, induction, and pre-exit information and advice for students and potential students.

Policy Practice based on basic written principles, based themselves on the UDACE definitions. Policy is seen as shaped by responding to needs and, therefore, is practical and flexible

SERVICE

Modes The modes of delivery cover:

- *pre-entry* - literature, postal replies, telephone and face-to-face including assessment for entry and additional advice, eg financial guidance
- *induction* - literature (induction pack), class discussions
- *ongoing* - face-to-face appointments and drop-in, some telephone
- *pre-exit* - - individual and group meetings, literature and referrals to careers service

Locations Administrative base is in the main college building with 3 rooms around the college. There is one person responsible for guidance in each department

When established 1982

Catchment area Town and outlying areas

Accountability College Depute Director

Networks Local network including universities, community education and prison services, LEC, and ABE

Monitoring effectiveness No formal evaluation of effectiveness. Notes are kept of who their clients are, what their needs are, the Service's response and any necessary follow up action.

RESOURCES

Funding There is no direct budget for guidance in the college at present. Funding comes to the college from the local authority and is then allocated as seen fit by the Director and Depute Director (funding mechanism due to change soon and involve cost centres).

Staff 2 full-time, 1 Head of Student Services and 1 guidance officer plus contact person in each department.

CLIENTS

On average, the service deals with 700-900 per year, most of whom are adults. *Mature students have no hangups about coming for help.*

Most common queries were about:

- financial advice about bursaries, whether to stay on income support or get a bursary (particularly from single-parents).
- nature of the courses, eg teaching methods, assessment and age range on courses, SWAP.

Case study C: cont'd

Policy

There are no formal guidance policies, rather, at the inception of the Service, its policy was loosely based on principles set down in guidance literature including that of UDACE. In this policy was an undertaking to provide a pre-entry and ongoing and pre-exit guidance service and to make links with other agencies and schools. The policy is seen as quite practical and flexible, in that it responds to clients' needs. There is a more formal approach at the pre-entry stage.

Guidance is seen as generic, and includes giving advice and teaching. It is not seen as separate from counselling. Above all, the Service claims to adhere to the principle of impartiality.

The service aims to support individuals to get on the right courses and to become more satisfied with themselves.

Issues

- Formal, written policies are seen as sometimes restricting

  We don't work to the letter, we respond to need. If we wrote it now, it would be vastly different, because we're expanding into new areas and being more proactive....We've always tried to have our own idea of what guidance is for us. Other colleges may differ and use different terms, but everyone is trying to make students more self aware, more self reliant.

- Lack of support from some families for women to pursue educational opportunities.
- The Service is likely to become more formal as it is due to become more systematically integrated into the admissions system. Also as the funding for FE changes to formula funding, the Service's guidance provision is likely to be more accountable in terms of its remit and performance. This might lead to more formal policies.

Guidance provision

The service is embedded within a range of activities supporting staff and students. The service provides departments with an interview checklist to ensure that applicants know about alternatives in the college. The Service claims to undertake all of the SCAGES activities, with the most common being informal assessment of clients' abilities at the pre-entry stage, advising and enabling. Lecturers are encouraged to deal with problems at 'ground-level', but always to refer difficult cases to guidance staff. There is an 'open-door' policy rather than any targeting of clients. The form of targeting is at the induction stage, when new students will receive specific guidance on the college and what services are available.

Issues

- In some cases there is little feedback between the Service and individual lecturers about what guidance has been provided.
- There is no follow up of clients so *'we often don't know what the result is if they don't come back'.*
- Reorganisation means that one person in each department will be responsible for guidance. Training for such people is necessary and college supports it to the time of staff involved. Meet every Friday afternoon. Can this continue?
- Suspicious of computerisation of guidance because adults are insecure and need face-to-face contacts.

Resources

To date, the resourcing of the service has been stable, within the limits of the overall college budget. The Head of the Service has usually been able to obtain the support of the college management for any particular funding.

Issues

- The limitations placed on the overall college funding are seen as directly affecting the current performance of the Student Support Service and its ability to be proactive. For example:
- Lack of accommodation limits the ability of the Service to provide confidential one-to-one guidance.

Case study C: cont'd

- Finance and resources limit the number of staff who give priority to spending time on providing guidance rather than monitoring the Service.
- Limits on resources affect the ability of the Service to be more proactive in providing targeted guidance for groups in the local community such as women returners and those likely to benefit from SWAP.
- Worked in close collaboration with the Region to devise passport to learning scheme for the unemployed but DSS regulations for unemployed meant that it was unworkable.

Future

The Service will be more integrated with the admissions system and will act as a quality control for pre-entry guidance. Other developments are seen as better accommodation for interviews and an improved reception system to welcome and process clients more effectively.

Universities are currently seen as 'courting' the college because they are being pushed for higher student numbers and are looking to see if they can articulate with the college's courses. The Service expects to be at the forefront of any closer links with universities as they already have good links with their admissions services and, therefore, can act as an unbiased facilitator to assist students find the most appropriate higher education courses.

Marketing, running 'taster' courses and information sessions for adults on alternatives and on finance, are activities which the providers feel are worthwhile for the future. Has plans for becoming more of an outreach college. Bidding for additional funding from local Enterprise initiative and TVEI extension – *'There is a buzz and a vision about where we're going'*.

Issues

- Secure funding is seen as affecting the viability of almost all the intended future developments of the Service.
- New funding arrangements mean that decisions will have to be made about pre-exit guidance. Should it be bought in from Region or make an internal appointment?
- In small towns *'people know everybody, so whatever happens you'll get a reputation good or bad'*.
- *'Patchy provision and parochialness'* adult education in Scotland. No Scottish equivalent of the National Guidance Initiative for England and Wales.

Case study D: National Distance Learning, Guidance And Advice Services

AIMS

Purpose

The guidance provision is an intrinsic component of the overall educational system. There are no entry requirements to this education therefore guidance at pre-entry, ongoing and pre-exit stages are essential to support the needs of the very wide range of students

Policy

There is little formal guidance policy, rather a set of procedures exist for each stage of the student's educational experience. There is a strong ethos of client centredness and respecting the needs as identified by the client . This ethos, rather than a formal policy shapes the guidance and the education which is provided.

SERVICE

Modes

The modes of delivery cover academic guidance and counselling via course tutor-counsellors and additional advice available from location centres:

- *pre-entry* - open days, prospectus and other courses' literature, telephone and face-to face advice
- *ongoing* - face-to-face and telephone correspondence, some group work and visits for those in remote areas or who are disabled
- *pre-exit* - literature , face-to-face and discussions with other students

Locations

One administrative base, 36 urban centres and 13 rural centres at which face-to-face guidance is provided by part-time staff. In addition there are over 600 educational staff throughout Scotland who can provide initial guidance by telephone, appointments and correspondence.

When established

Since the beginning of the overall educational service.

Catchment area

The case study focused upon here deals with Scotland, but the overall educational service serves the UK

Accountability

The Scottish director of the education service at the administrative base

Networks

Many contacts with other educational providers, community education services including ABE, and guidance providers throughout Scotland, with sub-networks in different regions.

Monitoring effectiveness

The Service uses many objective and subjective indicators of effectiveness gathered through a mix of formal and informal evaluation and monitoring

RESOURCES

Funding

The overall educational service receives a grant from the DES. From this the Scottish part of the service can decide how best to allocate money including what proportion will be used for guidance services

Staff

5 full-time staff at the Regional Enquiry Service
600 Part-time tutor-counsellors and secretarial and support staff in Scotland

CLIENTS

Approximately 4500 in 1991.

Most common queries were about:

- Nature of the courses, ie content, assessment etc
- Academic problems
- Attendance at residential schools and possible financial implications

Case study D: cont'd

Policy

While there are no specific formal policies on guidance provision there are procedures and processes for guidance at the pre-entry, ongoing and pre-exit stages of the educational provision. These have evolved over time to deal with learners' needs and are grounded in an ethos of client centredness. The policy for guidance can be summarised by the Service's aim of creating a programme of response based on the needs of clients. The actual nature of any guidance provided is shaped and prioritised according to the needs of the particular client. The service distinguishes between careers advice and academic guidance/counselling.

The Service does not normally target particular groups. Individual tutors might identify those students who are likely to need more support than others and provide this. Or if students are coming to the end of their course, pre-exit information and advice will be given. Occasionally, targeting of groups does occur when certain initiatives take place. For example, the Service might provide information to women returners or ethnic groups about educational opportunities and how to take advantage of them.

Issues

- There is some concern over the lack of a clear and formal policy with an associated philosophical base for guidance. This is summarised by the view that guidance in the organisation has

> *...always been by other people as a second rate activity. It's always been insecure, it's lacked confidence and my own personal view is that it hasn't developed an orthodoxy of practice, where it's firmly rooted in a clear-cut rationale, that it has a philosophical underpinning of aims and objectives, of generic ways of achieving these that have been tried and tested and validated. I think we operate far too much at an anecdotal level, not deriving practice from a principle which exemplifies a particular approach. The difficulties that has engendered have downgraded the provision and the professionalism of the service and I would think we have a long way to go on that.*

Guidance provision

The Service undertakes all of the SGAGES guidance activities, with the prioritisation of each depending on the particular needs of the student who is receiving support. *'I love to see that grass roots approach – you start at the needs of the learner.'*

In addition to the Regional Enquiry Service, tutors will provide academic, course administration, pre-exit and personal guidance as appropriate throughout a student's course. The guidance and education provision is aimed as allowing the students to become independent, able to stand back and identify problems and think out strategies:

> *the object of the exercise is that the person also comes out at the end with the knowledge and the skills that are the content of the course, but also learns how to work with that knowledge, how to work with themselves in a social and work context in developing themselves further*

Tutors are facilitators in the counselling sense. In the remote areas a system of counsellors operating from rural centres fulfils an outreach function. These counsellors play an important role in remote communities in networking with other agencies and as sources of education and guidance.

Conference call telephone links can be arranged to bring tutors and groups of students together. All correspondence with students reinforces guidance and informs them about what is available. Tutors can tap into specialist guidance services within and outwith the organisation. As much of the guidance is provided over the telephone, students are given appropriate times to call but can make contact anytime there is an 'emergency'.

Much of the guidance structure is informal. The types of students who are seen as needing the most support are those with little experience of what is involved in advanced education and those whose financial problems or circumstances are going to take some 'juggling' to meet the simultaneous demands of ordinary life and study. They may be uncertain about vocational goals. In such cases a proactive approach is used to pick up on any problems these students might have.

Case study D: cont'd

Statutory obligation to provide tutor counsellors and location counsellors with training during in first two probationary years in the system. Regional staff have annual meetings supplemented by telephone conferences.

Issues

- While some tutors are sensitive to the needs of those students who are more likely to have adjustment problems when starting study, there is some concern that this type of guidance doesn't happen as much as the organisation would like.

- Difficult to monitor the quality and effectiveness of client/tutor-counsellor interaction.

Resources

Apart from finance and resources being made available for the 'Regional Enquiry Service' which acts as a central information and advice centre for Scotland, money also comes to guidance through the Senior Counsellors. They are responsible for student support generally across all faculties. Specific funding is routed to remote areas in the form of establishing the rural centres which provide special support for students in these areas. Funding for guidance provided directly or indirectly appears to be steady.

Future

The Organisation would like to develop 'education shops' targeted at groups who would benefit from education but who fall outwith Access courses provision. Such 'shops' would possess all the necessary pre-entry guidance and support for such people.

It is hoped that more use can be made of technology to increase communication between tutors and their students. For example, with computer conferencing, students could communicate between centres. A more comprehensive answer.

A national body for guidance could be helpful if its remit were broad and it *'acted as a sort of facilitating catalyst, providing neutral ground'* for the exploration of sensitive issues, for circulation of good practice and a pressure group to enhance Scottish educational guidance policies.

Case study E: Regional Adult Guidance Unit

AIMS

Purpose To provide comprehensive information and guidance on education and training opportunities for adults in the region. The emphasis is on working with long-term unemployed, and some advocacy

Policy Formal explicit policy in annual report and prospectus including reference to UDACE definitions.

SERVICE

Modes The modes of delivery cover:

- leaflets and literature (including general and vocational)
- appointments
- drop-in
- group sessions including working with adults in schools
- outreach in target areas
- computer assisted guidance, ie JIG-CAL
- telephone enquiry service
- exhibitions, events and seminars

Locations One regional administrative headquarters. Outreach provision using 16 'Host' sites in careers offices, local services offices, 1 community education area office and 1 school/community college.

When established 1987 following a 1 year pilot.

Catchment area Region-wide.

Accountability Regional Council through the Regional Careers Service.

Networks Members of substantial Regional network (especially careers officers), TAP and access to UK wide contacts.

Monitoring effectiveness Systematic records of client and staff contact and feedback forms. Collation of feedback forms on quarterly basis. Aiming towards performance monitoring with annual targets. Monitoring feeds into development plan.

RESOURCES

Funding 55% Regional Council (core funding).
45% European Social Fund (ESF).
Additional minor amount self generated.

Staff First 4 permanent staff appointed 1990
7 full-time, 3 part-time.

CLIENTS

1991 – 3639 adults of whom adults of whom 78% 'unwaged'. 60% male, 40% female. Mostly clients are from the local population. Typically there are adults who are using education to meet vocational needs and increasingly those who have had changes in their circumstances. Target groups vary but have included women returners, adults with special needs and long-term unemployed.

Most common queries were about:

- financial issues
- vocational education and training
- HNCs and HNDs

Case-study E: cont'd

Policy

The Unit has explicit written policies and working practice papers with a development plan which has as its core the 7 UDACE guidance activities with emphasis on client centredness, confidentiality and advocacy. Policy and provision is reviewed annually and modified in order to be responsive and pro-active. The Unit aims to help all who ask for assistance but those in current employment and seeking a career change are lower in the list of priorities than the long-term unemployed and unwaged.

Issues

- It is difficult to maintain a balance between core remit, providing 'non-priority' services and those services which can be resourced by other agencies.
- advocacy can cause tensions with education providers who may be funded on the basis of student numbers and therefore place priority on getting students into courses and sometimes overlook whether courses suit individuals' needs.

Guidance provision

Pre-entry guidance through face-to-face hour long interviews make extensive use of regional network initiative with local offices providing back-up information service and location for adult guidance. Have taken long-term proactive approach and measures to reach the long-term unemployed who are the main priority group currently.

Issues

The main target group, the long term unemployed (especially men) are difficult to reach.

- Investment of guidance time is expensive and leaves fewer resources to participate in wider innovations in educational guidance.
- Individual interviews need privacy and accommodation not easily available at host sites. This affects waiting times. Despite this investment of time 15% of adults don't turn up for interview.
- Client groups are partly determined by the current effort to reach the maximum number of unemployed people. Also committed to special needs provision and pursuing this thrcugh networking.

  It is an area we could devote a lot of time to but we feel we are not resourced to do so, because it is a fairly time consuming client group to deal with sometimes very small rewards.
- The term information and advice is used rather than guidance in dealing with clients as guidance can be seen by adults as having negative connotations.
- Self development is fairly ad hoc. Plans for more systematic annual review with individual staff sacrificed through lack of time. Regular staff meetings pinpoint group needs to be met.

Resources

Core resources from the Regional Council are reasonably steady but only cover just over half of services. Other sources theoretically less dependable.

Issues

- Necessary clerical support required for quality assurance is difficult to obtain due to limited resources.
- Target groups are largely determined and modified by sources of funding, eg new financial initiatives to support new client groups in pre-redundancy training. Also additional funding to broaden service not available from LEC because service is already perceived as adequate.
- The ESF funding could dry up at any time.

Future

Developing plans to be responsive to local employment context such as impending redundancies and European initiatives. Would require database on labour market trends to inform vocational guidance.

As a result of being closely tied to economic development initiatives, new client groups emerging would include those in pre-redundancy situations and those requiring training needs analysis.

There is no agency responsible for the overall quality of guidance services and yet the results of poor guidance can be very significant for the individual who has chosen an inappropriate course of action. A national agency would be able to contribute both to quality assurance and to provide a forum for sharing practice.

Case study F: Training Access Point (TAP) Agency

AIMS

Purpose

To increase awareness of the range of training available and therefore to promote the uptake of training through the production of a database available through TAP points.

Policy

Formal written policies set down at UK level, but also introduced regional policies aimed at improving and expanding the service. Policies are shaped by an annual business plan.

SERVICE

Modes

The modes of delivery cover:

- Computer-accessed information on vocational education and training opportunities in the Region (main mode of provision)
- Advisory service for individuals uses face-to face appointments and the telephone
- Advisory service for businesses mainly uses the telephone
- Occasional outreach work

Locations

1 headquarters, 13 TAP at 'host' sites throughout the region and 2 mobile units which can be used for outreach work

When established

1988 by Training Agency.

Catchment area

Region-wide

Accountability

The TAP manager reports directly to the Principal Regional Careers Officer. The LEC also requires an annual report. The TAP has a relatively high level of autonomy

Networks

The TAP takes a leading role in the active regional network which includes careers service; most organisations and personnel involved in some way with adult educational guidance in the region and nationally. Links with other Scottish TAP services, NIACE, UDACE and NEAGA

Monitoring effectiveness

Ongoing 'market research' informs the annual business plan which, in turn, can alter the agency's policy and practice

RESOURCES

Funding

LEC
Regional Council
Some European Social Fund (ESF)
the agency generates about 3-7% of its income

Staff

9 full-time equivalent staff posts

CLIENTS

In 1991, 3000 people used the service, of which 600 were seeking basic information and advice in addition to the information provided by the computer and 400 wanted more complex advice.

Most common queries were about:

- main TAP provision - the range and details of vocational courses available
- advice service - further clarification of details given by the computer

Case-study F: cont'd

Policy

The agency possesses explicit written policies set down at UK level, which aim to promote the take-up of vocational education and training by increasing the awareness of what opportunities were available. These policies are operationalised by producing and up-dating a database of vocational education and training. In addition to this remit, the regional Agency felt compelled to offer further information and advice to users and this then became integrated into its own policy. The Agency is constantly monitoring its service to assess whether any changes are necessary. This process is seen as an essential element in the provision of an effective guidance service.

In the guidance world people don't often have a clear idea of the profile of their clients, who is out there and what information they're seeking . Unless you have this you can't target your services. Not all TAP agencies do this but they are increasingly becoming more systematic in their policy formulation.

Issues

- Is too much time being spent defining guidance and too little on providing it?
- The attitude of the LEC can affect policies, in that it provides the funding and therefore can determine the direction of the agency. The current disposition of the LEC is to provide guidance which serves the needs of individuals and businesses.
- An annual business plan allows a constant review of policies and practice and, therefore, ensures the Agency is effective and appropriate.
- The implementation of policy is dependent on maintaining an accurate and up-to-date database – a formidable task.

Guidance provision

The main form of guidance provision is information on vocational education and training opportunities in the region. This is provided using a computer database accessed via remote terminals. The staff at each 'host' site will, if necessary, provide assistance on how to use the terminal and provide information on further sources of advice.

This core service is supported by two advisory services, one for individual clients who want further information and advice, and one for businesses who want information on training course availability in the region. The advisory services are innovations of this particular agency and there is a nominal cost for businesses who might want a search done of particular types of training in their area. This TAP also offers a small research service for training providers, eg an analysis of available training in a particular sector.

There is little active targeting apart from occasional initiatives aimed at women returners and ethnic minorities. Undertakes ongoing market research to provide better evidence of client groups and their needs.

Agency undertakes to train two staff in any organisation setting up a TAP point, to enable them to provide help to TAP clients and to link up with referral networks established by the agency. *'Because TAPs is about training, we have to put our money where our month is.'* Comprehensive training/staff development plan.

Issues

- Staff turnover means that training has to be recurrent.
- Guidance provision is actively shaped by policy, which must be informed by ongoing 'market research' and an annual report. One example of the provision being altered is the selection of different sites in which to base the TAP terminals.
- This particular TAP agency felt that the computer-only mode of delivery was rather limited and so developed the two advisory services. The Agency feels that this and other examples of good practice could be taken up across the TAP service in general.

Case study F: cont'd

- The wider guidance network is seen as necessary to promote the effectiveness of the service to provide feedback on the service and also in dealing with people referred by the Agency.

Resources

The resources for the service are determined largely by the LEC on an annual basis. To date the LEC has been supportive of new initiatives and has maintained a balance in serving both individual clients and the needs of businesses.

Issues

- Like policy, the resources for the Agency are very much shaped by the perspective of the LEC.
- One of the main factors affecting the effectiveness of the service is funding and resources. The maintenance of the database is labour intensive and, as this is the core remit, resources must be channelled into this area. Lack of resources limits the range of other activities the service would like to offer and sees as a useful and necessary expansion of the service.
- This TAP has had fairly steady funding though can only plan year to year. Other TAPs tend to have wide variations in their funding. *'One year they are doing well, the next year they're cut and the next it's back up again. So of course that has an effect on staff who are concerned about their future.'*

Future

The Agency is continually alert to widening its delivery and service. It would like to provide specific databases on training, eg women returners database with details of childcare provision. Advances in new technology such as CD-ROM are seen as opening new possibilities in widening access to the databases. In addition the Agency would hope to be a key member of any formal adult educational guidance service which is set up in the region. If there is no official backing for such an initiative the Agency might attempt to formalise the existing regional network.

Issues

- Again, finances and resources will dictate to a large extent any future developments. The Agency envisages that short-term contracts and consultants could be used to set up some of the initiatives such as specific databases
- There is a need for more accurate labour market trend analysis to help adults select the most appropriate courses and training for future employment and to inform the providers of such courses.

Case study G: WEA Taught Guidance Course

AIMS

Purpose The taught guidance course 'Options and Choices' uses SCOTVEC modules for women returners to build up their potential and facilitate any actions they decide to take after taking stock of their circumstances and lives

Policy There is no formal written policy on guidance

SERVICE

Modes The modes of delivery cover:

- taught course 'Options and Choices' (part-time day attendance)

Locations One administrative base with courses provided at 6 sites

When established This course has been provided since 1992

Catchment area Region-wide

Accountability Regional WEA

Networks Member of a regional adult educational network which includes ABE, Community Education Services. Contacts outside the region include NIACE

Monitoring effectiveness There is no formal monitoring of the effectiveness; informal qualitative feedback from clients and tutors is used

RESOURCES

Funding Multiple sources. LEC is the main source of funding for this particular course
Some regional funding via Community Education Service
SOED,funding has decreased over time
European Social Fund (ESF) provides some funding

Staff 1 full-time tutor-organiser
8-12 part-time tutors

CLIENTS

Approximately 100-150 per year. Most clients are women under 35 who have children who are just starting school

Case study G: cont'd

Policy

While there is no explicit and formal WEA policy on adult educational guidance in this region, there has been an interest in providing 'pre-vocational' guidance and 'enabling' people, particularly women and disadvantaged groups. This has become more structured over the last 5 years and over the same period there has been an increase in demand from adults for accredited courses. Thus the Options and Choices course represents an aspect of the WEA's current provision. Underpinning all of this there is an ethos of client-centred education in which guidance is embedded.

> *Adult guidance has always been at the heart of provision ... but in the last few years ... it* [the WEA] *has begun to address it a bit more formally.*

Issues

- The wish to reflect the needs of some clients for accredited courses as well as more finance being available for courses with more vocational applicability has shaped this particular aspect of WEA education/guidance provision.

Guidance provision

The Options and Choices course begins with people taking stock and trying to look at the transferability of skills The next phase is finding information and following it up using an action plan which is continually revised in the light of any obstacles such as finances, child care, travel considerations to overcome or adapt to them. The course is felt to particularly benefit those women who *'didn't achieve their potential first time around'*. Other target groups include the elderly, adults with learning difficulties, adults with mental health problems and the socially disadvantaged. It provides an introduction to the changing educational scene which now includes performance criteria, learning outcomes, continuous assessment etc.

A lot of individual, face-to-face guidance is provided as part of the course. Sometimes guidance will move into counselling, for example if a client has a life crisis. Tutors are given advice on when to refer such students to more appropriate types of counselling.

Issues

- This course is said to reflect the demand from adults, particularly women, for more vocationally-orientated guidance and accredited courses and a decline in demand for more personal development and critical awareness courses. The WEA still feels that such courses should be available for those who want them.

Resources

The newest and main route to funding is through the LEC. The LEC is said to 'really like accreditation', and this has played a part in helping the WEA to fund and run the Options and Choices course.

> *The other thing is that the LECs particularly are our new pathway to funding and they really like accreditation. It's up to me to sell them the point that not all learning and not all guidance is accredited and I think now that we've, hopefully, proven our worth this last year, we might have a bit more flexibility.*

Issues

- There is a perceived need for the WEA to be assertive when seeking funding from the LEC to push for broader courses and not just the accredited and more vocational courses

  > *I'm not saying they wouldn't have funded us without Options and Choices but it helped. I think we've grown in confidence and will be able to go back to them and say 'that's fine in certain situations or for certain types of people, yes we'll continue to do that, but at the same time we'd like to offer a little bit more wide ranging service'.*

- The funding from the SOED has declined over recent years and there has been an increasing need to seek multiple and diverse sources of funding for courses.
- The limited funding is said to affect the number of staff and, therefore, the amount of time tutors can spend on evaluation of the course. Formal evaluation is not seen as necessary as informal feedback has been sufficient. However, as funding increasingly comes from the LEC, they will demand accountability using more formal measures and indicators.

Case study G: cont'd

Future

The WEA would like to see more 'advice shops' to service communities in which a whole range of services could co-operate to provide guidance. More decentralisation of provision, outreach and assessment of prior learning are seen as desirable developments.

4 What do adults want and do they get it?

As we have seen in Chapter 1, adults can have an extremely wide range of guidance needs reflecting their varied circumstances and wishes. Our project had as one of its key areas an investigation of clients experiences of guidance (Strand 3). In particular, the reasons adults seek guidance, whether they get the help they want and what, if anything can be done to improve guidance services? This chapter reports on the main findings of the telephone survey of 158 adults who used the educational guidance services of the providers we focused on in the second strand of our work. The survey looked at the adults' experiences of different kinds of provision. In particular, it examined what advice, information and support they wanted and assessed their perceptions on the effectiveness of the providers they used.

The adults were identified with the assistance of the 7 guidance providers who made up our case studies. Because of the relatively small number of respondents and the self-selecting nature of the sample we cannot claim that the survey findings are generalisable in terms of all adult guidance users. However, they do allow us to explore the needs of a range of adults seeking educational and vocational guidance services and their experiences in dealing with the various types of guidance provided. Such information is valuable in establishing what adults appreciate about guidance services and what improvements they can suggest.

As we saw in Chapter 3, our guidance providers vary in the nature and type of advice, information and support that they provide. For example, one provides information and advice mainly on vocational courses and training available in a region, whereas another will provide advice to all adults on many aspects of education but also targets particular priority groups. The providers in our study also used a range of modes of delivery to inform, advise and support adults. In using our providers to identify adults who had used guidance services we hoped to reach clients who could inform us about this range of provision from the users' perspective.

While the remit and styles of guidance may vary, all of our providers agree that their provision should adhere to a common set of principles of good or quality guidance. These are summarised in Appendix 3 and we will look more closely at the issue of quality guidance in Chapter 6. The survey based questions on these principles of good guidance to check clients' views of *'ideal'* guidance and of the guidance they actually received. Other questions were aimed at finding out what the clients wanted guidance on and why. They were also asked, where appropriate, for suggestions on specific improvements which could be made to the services of the guidance provider they had used.

How did the clients find out about the providers?

In looking for information and advice on education and training opportunities adults usually lack the more accessible support or sources of information that school-leavers might have. For example, adults are far less likely to have the input of a careers officer in the way many school leavers do. Also the informal sources of information and even pressure to choose certain options are different for adults. For example, parental and sibling information or pressure might influence younger people in seeking educational opportunities (Howieson and Semple 1993) whereas one might expect adults to be influenced by their partners. Peer pressure for both adults and school-leavers might influence their educational choices.

The first area we looked at was how clients located the provider they received help from. As one might expect, the adults became aware of the guidance providers in a range of ways.

The clients in our study identified providers of guidance from a range of sources. The most common were adverts in the local press, their employer, friends and leaflets or literature from the provider.

Table 3: How did clients find out about the provider they used?

	%	N
Advertisements in the local press	16	25
Employer	14	22
Friends	13	20
Leaflets and prospectus from provider	10	15
Job Centre	9	14
Colleges of FE	8	12
Careers offices	6	9
Work mates	3	9
HE institutions	4	6

Note: All respondents were allowed to give more than one answer
157 respondents answered this question

There are some parallels here with earlier SCRE research on adult education which included how adults find out about educational opportunities and providers. Such research (Munn, MacDonald and Lowden 1990 unpublished) showed that adults discovered the existence of potentially suitable providers from a range of sources. Interestingly, the sources used and their rank order were quite similar to those given in Table 3, but with one important difference. In our earlier work we found that a further or higher education institution was the most common source used to identify educational opportunities. This difference might be explained by the fact that our earlier work was specifically focusing on adults who had returned to education. It is possible that these people might have identified the final or most influential source of guidance they used, ie the institution where they went on to take a course. Many of the adults in our guidance survey are at an earlier stage in their search for information about

educational opportunities. Unlike the earlier study, the adults in the guidance survey were not looking for particular courses but rather for sources of guidance on wider education or training opportunities.

The complementary study of this project *Facing Goliath* (Blair, McPake and Munn, 1993) found that most initial educational guidance is informal and fortuitous. Less than a fifth of adult returners obtained advice through official channels. This report on adult returners asks a key question: How many potential returners give up before they locate even one prospective provider, too frustrated to continue?

The wide range of sources through which the adults identified guidance providers indicates that adults do not find out about what is available from a single point. This again contrasts with the advice available for school leavers, who can usually receive information on education, training and employment opportunities from a single point - the careers service. There is no central point of nationally and regionally co-ordinated guidance which possesses of comprehensive information on guidance provision, and which could give clients an initial contact, a 'one-stop' centre in each area. A full-range of information on what services exist is rarely accessible in any one place or through one system, nationally or locally. Our interviews with providers revealed that the development of nationally co-ordinated information on guidance would be welcomed by the providers themselves and they would like to see their networks receive resources to set up such centres.

The categories in Table 3 may conceal the differences between those people who have a clear idea of direction and those who are more vague about their future. The work undertaken for Strand 1 of this project has shown that adults are often influenced in their choice of provider by what they perceive as their needs. For example, if obtaining a qualification is the priority they may contact a college, university or other provider of courses and so receive guidance from them. If they have no clear priority they might contact, in a random or *ad hoc* fashion, any provider which offers some chance of providing information and advice.

Referrals

Given the fact that many of our providers stressed the role played by networking in their guidance provision, it was quite a surprise to find that only 13% of our sample (21 people) had been referred to the provider from another agency or provider, 88% of respondents (139 people) approached providers on their own initiative.

Of the 21 people who had been referred, 6 had been referred to more than one guidance and education provider. Of the 21 referrals, 16 felt that they had been referred to the right organisation and only 1 person said that the referral had been unsuitable. Only 1 of the referrals had to wait some time before receiving any assistance from the provider they were referred to, and this had led to a sense of frustration, knowing that information upon which to make decisions was needed quickly. Only 5 of the 21 referrals suggested improvements which could be made to the system. These covered more feedback (cited twice); more specific information; more general information; faster referral times; friendlier. These were each cited once.

What did people want information and advice on?

One of the most important aims of this survey was to find out what adults wanted guidance on. We asked our respondents first about the range of information and advice they wanted and then we asked them what was the single most important type of guidance they wanted.

Table 4: What types of information and advice did clients want from providers?

	%	N
Course availability	80	124
Vocational ed. and training	70	109
Careers	54	85
How to get on to a course	54	85
Post-course opportunities	51	79
Specific personal interest education	39	61
Job opportunities	33	52
Financial advice	32	50
Assessment of abilities	25	39
Study skills help	18	28
Academic help	16	25
Personal matters	8	13
Other/unspecified	7	11
Planning for retirement	4	7
Coping with redundancy	1	2

Note: All respondents were allowed to give more than one answer
157 respondents answered each category of this question

Although course availability seems to be the main concern, if we look at the categories related to a vocational concern there are a greater number of these. This does not necessarily mean many clients do not want information on course availability. It is reasonable to speculate that many were referring to courses they saw as vocational. When we compare these figures with their response to being asked what was the single most important thing they wanted information and advice on, we see a similar pattern.

Table 5: What was the single most important type of information and advice clients wanted?

	%	N
Course availability	33	52
Vocational ed. and training	20	31
Careers	9	14
How to get onto a course	6	10
Financial advice	6	10
Post-course opportunities	5	8
Job Opportunities	5	8
Assessment of abilities	4	6
Specific personal interest education	3	5
Other/unspecified	3	5
Academic help	2	4
Study skills help	1	2

We can see the combination of vocational categories again predominates when clients specify what help they want most from providers. Given that the range of evidence collected in our provider interviews offers support for this view. For example, our WEA provider had noted that the demand for more vocationally-orientated guidance and courses had risen from groups of clients who once wanted personal development. The demographic profile of our respondents (See Appendix 4) shows that 41% of the clients were in employment, 24 were unemployed and 17 we classified as 'house-person'. Given the current economic uncertainty and the ramifications this has for security of employment and the importance of finding work if unemployed (and possibly a house-person), it is perhaps not surprising that the demand for vocationally-orientated guidance was so high even though 41% of the clients were in employment. Again, our interviews with the providers supported this by indicating a rise in client demand for advice on retraining and careers advice from employed people.

After the clients' demand for course availability and vocational types of guidance, their single most important requests for advice tail off sharply with no one category standing out from the rest. However, if we look back at Table 4, where clients could specify the range of guidance they wanted, we can see more subtle 'shades' to the clients needs. For example, guidance on opportunities that courses could lead on to figures more prominently. This suggests that some clients have a strategy or long-term plan when thinking about their education and training and this is reflected in their guidance needs. Also, given the demand for more vocationally-orientated guidance, some clients might want to know what careers opportunities courses will offer upon completion. It is interesting that Table 4 reveals reasonably high levels of client demand for financial advice (mainly about grants and bursaries) and guidance on education linked to their personal interests. This is not echoed when the clients are asked to specify their single most important guidance need in Table 4. While many clients are concerned about money, it is apparently not their first concern.

In attempting to cross-tabulate the responses to questions with clients characteristics (ie age, sex, employment status) we are constrained by the number of clients who responded to our questions. If there are too few responses in our computations the findings are not significant and meaningless. However, in cases where it was possible to cross-tabulate questions there were some interesting findings.

When we compared responses on the most important information or advice the clients wanted by their sex there was no difference between men and women in terms of the most common responses - information on course availability and vocationally-orientated guidance were the most important for both men and women. However, there were some differences in the less common responses. For example, men were more likely than women to want financial information and advice (11% compared to 2%) but women were more likely to want assessment of their abilities (6% compared to 1%).

There were very few other differences on the basis of clients' demographics. There was some evidence that people aged between 30-39 were more likely than other age groups to want financial advice. One could speculate that this could be due to this age group being the most likely to have financial commitments which could be affected by participating in education. In terms of employment status,

full-time students were also more likely than other groups to want financial help. It is not possible to discern what problems or concerns these students had which led them to want financial guidance.

Did the clients get the information and advice they wanted?

We asked the clients whether they thought the providers had answered their questions or given appropriate help. Of all the respondents, 83% felt that they had got adequate information and advice on their most important query or problem, and 11% said that they had received partial help on it. Only 6% said that they did not get the help they were looking for.

Of those who said they received partial (N=9) or no help (N=17), 25 people commented on why this was; 7 were referred elsewhere; 3 said that the provider was not able/equipped to help them; 2 said the waiting time for assistance was too long; and 13 gave other unspecified responses.

Nevertheless these findings must be encouraging for the guidance providers as most clients report satisfaction with the information and help they received. Remembering that the clients in this survey were identified through our case study providers which, in turn, were selected on the basis of them being seen by many in the Scottish educational and guidance world as examples of good practice, then these findings perhaps add weight to this view. However, we would advise some caution in interpreting these findings. Firstly, the clients who took part in our survey were self-selecting and the sample size was quite small. These clients might not necessarily be representative of all the clients of the providers in the study. Secondly our other work at SCRE on adult education (Blair, McPake and Munn, 1993) suggests that adults often have relatively low expectations of guidance, and can be satisfied with relatively little information and guidance. Given that 16% were not totally satisfied with the guidance they received, there is no room for complacency.

Modes of delivery of guidance

Our survey was also interested in finding out how the clients received their guidance and how satisfied they were with the various modes of delivery. To obtain this information we asked a multiple response question specifying a list of modes, from which the clients could identify which one(s) they had used and also indicate whether they thought it/they had been a suitable way to receive the guidance. The results are shown below in Table 6.

Table 6: Modes of delivery and client satisfaction

	Used mode		Was it a suitable way to get advice?			
			Yes		No	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Information in literature form	68	106	91	97	9	9
Face-to-face/dropping in	50	77	87	67	13	10
Telephone	47	74	82	61	18	13
Face-to-face/by appointment	44	68	90	61	10	7
Group discussion with support	25	38	76	29	24	9
Using a computer (with and without mediation)	22	34	65	22	35	12
Taught course (incl. induction in FE and HE)	20	31	74	23	26	8
Other	18	27	78	21	22	6

Guidance was most commonly received in some form of literature, with the next most frequent modes being 'dropping-in' to talk to guidance personnel, using the telephone and then talking to someone after making an appointment. The more restricted availability and use of the remaining modes (group discussion, taught course, computer-based) across the providers from which we identified our clients probably explains why these were cited less frequently.

Perhaps of more interest and importance than the actual modes by which guidance was received is the clients' satisfaction with them. We can see that, in general, there were high levels of satisfaction with almost all the modes of guidance and in particular with literature, face-to-face modes and the telephone. It is interesting that while clients were very satisfied with most of the modes, most criticism was directed at using a computer as a source of help. Unfortunately, we do not have any information on why this is and cannot distinguish between mediated and unmediated computer-based guidance. Our case studies suggest that ideally, new technology can make a substantial contribution to educational guidance. Perhaps, clients feel that more thought needs to be given to how this mode of delivery can best interact with the client.

We found that the only significant findings to arise from cross-tabulation of responses on the modes of delivery and the types of people who used them was that people with family responsibilities which they said would limit their ability to do full-time courses or jobs were more likely to use group work/discussions than those who did not have such responsibilities. One might have thought these people would be more likely to use the telephone. We can only speculate why these people wanted to do group work. Perhaps, those who have family responsibilities such as children see guidance which also provides social contact as valuable, in that it provides a break from the isolation of being in their home. While these people said they could not do full-time jobs or courses, it is possible that they could attend group guidance sessions which were likely to be put on at hours which would fit in with those who had children at school. Alternatively, the providers who ran the session might have also have offered créche facilities..

Overall satisfaction with the guidance provision

In addition to wanting to know what aspects of the providers' services the clients had used and how satisfied they were with gaining access and the mode of delivery, we were interested in clients' overall satisfaction with the guidance they had received. How satisfied were the clients with the services? What reasons did they give for their judgements and what, if any, suggestions did they have on how to improve the guidance?

Of all the respondents a very encouraging 90% said that overall, they had found the advice or information they had received satisfactory. Table 7 sets out the most commonly-cited reasons for clients' satisfaction.

Table 7: Clients' reasons for their satisfaction with the service

	%	N
All questions were answered	22	30
Accurate and reliable information	17	24
Generally helpful	14	19
Complete and clear information	11	16
Referred on to a suitable provider	9	13
Encouraging and supportive help	9	13

Note: Open-ended question. 139 people answered the question
All respondents were allowed to give more than one answer
other responses tailed off to very low values

These categories were generated from clients' responses to an open-ended question and appear to indicate that they valued comprehensive, clear and accurate information and advice to the queries and problems which they had sought help with.

In all, only 16 people expressed negative comments on the quality of the guidance they had received. The most commonly-cited examples fell into the four categories indicated in Table 8:

Table 8: Clients' reasons for their dissatisfaction with the service

	N
Incomplete information	9
Incorrect information	4
Info. generally unhelpful	3
Staff were unhelpful	2

Note: Open-ended question
Respondents were allowed to give more than one answer
Other responses tailed off to very low values

While these 16 clients are a minority compared with the number who were satisfied with their provider's service, for these particular individuals the failings of the provider might not seem insubstantial given the importance of educational guidance to an adult's subsequent decisions on participation in education. Fortunately from the providers point of view these 16 people (10% of the total sample) were not reporting their experiences of the same provider.

Another indicator of how satisfied the clients were with the providers' services was whether they would use the provider again. When we asked them this, 95% of all respondents said that they would. Their reasons for this were very diverse and are set out in Table 9:

Table 9: Clients' reasons for using their provider again if they needed guidance

	%	N
Generally helpful	30	42
Guidance proved successful	11	17
Clear and direct answers	10	15
Efficient and objective service	8	13
Friendly and supportive service	7	11
Comprehensive information	7	11
Familiar to client	7	11

Note: Other responses tailed off to very low values
Multiple response

Again, this must be good news for the providers in our study and promotes the view of them as examples of good practice.

For the very small number of people who said that they would not use the service again (5%), their reasons were that the service was too limited and generally unhelpful, with friends being a more useful source of advice.

Clients' suggestions for improving the quality of guidance

We asked the clients whether they could think of any improvements which could be made to the information and advice they received. 155 answered this question with exactly 50% (N=78) of them saying that improvements could be made to the service. We asked these people to specify what improvements they thought could be made and 77 provided the following range of responses:

Table 10: Clients' suggestions for improvements to guidance

	%	N
More complete information	29	22
More publicity	23	18
More specific information	6	5
Spend more time with clients	5	4
More accurate information	5	4
More feedback to clients	5	4
Improve staff skills	5	4

Note: Open ended question
multiple response allowed
77 respondents made suggestions

While we have seen an overwhelming level of client satisfaction with the guidance they received, it is interesting that almost 50% of the whole sample wanted to suggest improvements to the services they had used. Given the high levels of general satisfaction, we can speculate that these are minor, or 'fine-tuning' points made about the services. An alternative explanation is that suggested by our colleagues – work published in *Facing Goliath* – that adults could

be satisfied with minimal information such as a mailed prospectus. Being asked to reflect on the usefulness of the guidance in our survey enabled them to voice higher expectations than they had initially. The most commonly-cited suggestions are for providers to give more complete information and to publicise their services more fully. So, there would seem to be some scope for improvement across the providers in our case studies. However, as we have seen, providers are very hesitant about publicising their services to the extent that they cannot cope with demand. Also, the 'completeness' of their information in content and being up-to-date would have resource implications, with staff time being taken up in constantly monitoring and improving the content of the guidance to reflect the rapid changes in educational opportunities and associated issues.

Standards of guidance

We also devised a question based on the main criteria of quality provision which are widely recognised in the guidance world. This was used to check the clients' perceptions of the quality of provision using the standards often used by providers themselves. So when asked whether their provider possessed such criteria the clients responses were as follows in Table 11:

Table 11: Clients' perceptions of providers qualities

Criteria	Yes		No		Don't know	
	%	N	%	N	%	N
Designed to suit client's needs	77	121	15	23	8	14
Unbiased	87	138	9	14	4	6
Open to everyone	93	147	3	5	4	6
Private and confidential	83	131	5	8	4	19
Easy to get at	85	134	10	16	5	8
Free or low cost	96	152	2	3	2	3
Well-publicised	34	54	60	94	6	9
Friendly	98	155	–	–	2	3
In an attractive setting	46	73	24	3	30	48
Encouraging	89	139	5	8	6	10

These findings tell us that the clients generally feel that the providers meet key criteria of quality as specified by professionals in the field. The areas are least satisfactory are the publicity of services and the setting used to provide guidance. We have mentioned that most of the providers are wary about publicising their services because they fear that they will be overwhelmed by people, when there are limited resources to meet such a demand. The choice facing some providers is to limit the number of clients and deal with them in-depth or to spread resources thinly across the maximum number of clients. The latter strategy carried with it the danger of disappointing people with poorer quality services which were under such a strain. This could create disillusionment which could spread through the community and tarnish the image of the provider. This then was one major disincentive to increasing publicity levels. The physical settings also are resource-linked. Our initial findings suggest providers would rather spend money on paying for staff to ensure that guidance is delivered first and then look at the settings. Even so, providers regard the minimum conditions as having a room or space where discussions with clients can be kept confidential.

Wider benefits of guidance

One of the final areas we were interested in was whether the clients felt that had received wider benefits as a result of their guidance experience. In response to a closed question, most clients appeared to receive wider benefits from their experience of guidance:

- 96% of all respondents said that they would know where to obtain information or advice the next time they wanted it
- 83% of all respondents said that they were now better informed about education and training opportunities that were available
- 68% of all respondents said that they were now more certain about what they wanted to do in the near future.

It is interesting that despite most clients claiming they were satisfied with their guidance and were now better informed in general about where to get information and advice on opportunities, a lower percentage appear to be saying that they have a clearer idea of where they are going in the near future. This was in sharp contrast to the adult returners survey (Blair, McPake and Munn 1993) which claimed that many of the sample had not benefited from their use of guidance. Use of guidance did not help them to develop a strategy for gaining advice on progression to a more advanced educational programme (pre-exit guidance). However, this could be interpreted as a good or problematic state depending on the client's own perspective.

Previous contact with other providers of guidance

Our final topic in the survey looked at whether the clients had any previous contact with guidance providers. We wanted to see whether there were any patterns, such as clients continually using the same types of provider or whether they had a lot of experience of guidance and therefore might be more aware of what guidance was available and know their way around the guidance systems.

When clients were asked whether they had previously had any contact with guidance providers (including education institutions) 43% said that they had (67 people). By far the most commonly-cited sources of guidance used were FE and HE institutions (51%) with the next most commonly-cited being the Careers service (9%). This suggests a high profile for FE and HE institutions as an identified source of information and advice about education. This is not really that surprising in one sense, as previous research (Munn and MacDonald 1988) suggests the public will associate providers of education as an obvious source of information on courses and educational opportunities. However, this puts a great responsibility on such institutions to be unbiased and offer 'quality' guidance, especially when the prospects for increased institutional competition for student places appears to be growing. It is interesting that the respondents in our sample seeking guidance for at least the second time chose to find it from a different source. We do not know whether this was deliberate or as Munn *et al* claim reflects a lack of strategy and was *ad hoc*.

To summarise, the general picture one gets from the survey findings is that our sample of respondents wanted information on the availability of courses and sought largely vocationally-orientated guidance. Also most of the clients felt

that they had received this and were generally very satisfied with the services of their guidance providers. We stress that, while this makes uplifting and encouraging reading, our sample was self-selecting users of guidance services, relatively small in number and drawn from providers who have been identified by others in the field as examples of good practice.

Guidance is an elusive area. Potential clients often do not know what the boundaries of the universe of guidance are. This is easier to know once they have experienced guidance. This contrasts with the frequently-noted critical awareness of students on courses as expressed in their perceptions of assessment, teaching and content (Munn, Johnstone and Lowden 1993) where the aims, objectives, activities and boundaries are more clearly defined.

5 Do providers meet clients' needs?

We have seen in Chapter 3 what services providers aimed to deliver and what influenced their guidance. This was complemented by Chapter 4 which looked at our survey of adults' perspectives of the guidance they had received and revealed general satisfaction with the providers' services by these clients. This chapter amplifies Chapter 4 by drawing on the spontaneous comments made by clients in response to an open-ended question (Do you have anything else to add about your experiences of receiving advice and information from [Provider] or about educational information and advice for adults in general?).

The small size of our client sample means that we cannot break down the responses by provider to obtain any sensible findings about the individual providers and their particular clients. However, we can look at what providers' claimed to do, the aims of their guidance and look at the comments of their clients who gave impressions of the service they used in this final survey question.

We can use this qualitative information from these clients to elaborate on the comments provided by clients in the more structured parts of the survey and therefore shed more light on how well providers were meeting the needs of their clients. We present below a brief summary of each of the providers' aims and the quotes on the service from their clients who responded to the open-ended 'anything else to add' question. For each case study we summarise the main points to emerge and these, in turn, inform our conclusions on how well the providers met their clients needs.

Case study A

Aims - To develop and provide a region-wide Network of adult education guidance access points, utilising information technology where appropriate, and supported by a free-phone guidance help-line.

Positive comments:

— *Could be better publicised ... was very helpful and had I known about it earlier, I would have used it a long time ago instead of waiting till now.*

— *Very helpful!*

— *They give positive advice to people in an encouraging manner.*

— *Sorry I hadn't known the telephone number sooner to contact them.*

— *Very good information – helped me get onto an HND business admin course.*

— *Very satisfied (apart from more publicity).*

— *It is ideal because it saves time and money getting through to the right people in colleges and universities and saves waiting for them to reply to queries.*

Negative comments:

—*Advert not explicit enough for retired people. - needed more information on advert.*

—*More [specific] advice on courses available to people.*

—Need more careers advice.

—More information on other courses outside Glasgow.

—Could be better publicised.

—Could have been better advertised.

—Could have been better advertised.

—Could have been better advertised.

—Should tailor information more to suit individual rather than having to wade through other subjects etc.

Summary • The adults who made comments here are appreciative of easy ways of making their first contact with guidance providers, efficient processes - time saving and encouragement from staff. This attitude complements the expressed wish for better publicity and more detailed information.

Case study B

Aims - The Educational and Training Manager provides guidance for employees as part of the company's educational programme. This involves advising, informing and facilitating employees in relation to the educational programme and liaising with participating HE and FE providers.

Positive comments:

— *Overall very good – excellent!*

— *Brought in college personnel to help – good.*

— *I feel in the last couple of years when they've set up the education programme, they've been keen to give out information on courses and make sure everyone knows about them. Very helpful.*

Negative comments:

— *Structured examination is needed on what is available, more research into courses that are more necessary ie keyboard skills.*

— *Have to take the initiative. Have to have idea of what you are looking for. Most information came from [local] college. I just got basic information from work and applied to the college.*

— *No input now – no follow up.*

— *Things are improving in [their] general education guidance but not for specific skills training where very little information and advice exists*

Summary • While employees welcomed the support given by the company, they felt it would be more effective if there were some sort of assessment of their abilities and their needs matched against the suitable opportunities and courses available.

Case study C

Aims - To provide pre-entry, ongoing, induction, and pre-exit information and advice for students and potential students in the context of student support services at a college of further education.

Positive comments:

— *They're great! Like family I couldn't have got through the course without them!*

Negative comments:

— *Student services should widen their horizons ... have more advice on personal problems.*

— *Student services should get more recognition in the college – May need a higher profile. People tend not to know that they're there.*

— *Staff should check up on the information they give out. [The service] should be better publicised.*

— *I had to dig around to find out what I needed to know, that worked for me but perhaps others who are less forceful couldn't get the information they need.*

Summary • While we are only dealing with a small number of people here, the impression is that only those students who are determined to put effort into finding out about available services will get access to and benefit from the system.

Case study D

Aims - The guidance provision is an intrinsic component of the overall educational system. There are no entry requirements to this education therefore guidance at pre-entry, ongoing and pre-exit stages is essential to support the needs of the very wide range of students.

Positive comments:

— *Very good, almost an abundance of information. You have to plough through it.*

— *It's well publicised.*

— *Really good, pleasant, friendly.*

Negative comments:

The first comment is from a new applicant while the other two are people selecting the next part of their course.

— *Need to change advice on entry dates for applications as places fill up very quickly.*

— *Main problem with [provider] was no entry information at registration sessions and they didn't have enough Arts/Social Science [information] on display to help you decide what courses you wanted to do next term.*

— *More helpful advice from other students at these sessions about course content structure and even financial advice.*

Summary • This case study represents a large and diverse organisation which has a large amount of information available at a general level but there can be problems in providing detailed information for particular adults.

Case study E

Aims - To provide comprehensive information and guidance on education and training opportunities for all adults in the region, but emphasis is on specific target group, ie. the long-term unemployed

Positive comments:

— *Found them very helpful and friendly.*

— *Very satisfied with service.*

— *Overall personal service - excellent.*

— *Very pleased with the service provided – use again.*

— *They could be more active in promoting their excellent services.*

Negative comments:

— *Don't like waiting a week or two for appointment. Being a graduate gives you confidence but if you were shy or unsure you would be put off by the wait.*

— *More provision for evening interviews for those in full-time employment.*

— *Not well publicised. Difficult to know how to get help.*

— *Insufficiently advertised in the community.*

— *Get more information from 'Adult Learners Week' BBC package than from [the service]- inaccurate information on one particular course. It had an age restriction, only people 25 and older could go on it I was 24. The people at [service] didn't know about this.*

— *Leaflets could be more clear and better explained.*

— *They should be better informed, more accurate about what is going on in education, training and jobs at the moment.*

Summary • In this case study some clients are extremely pleased with the service. Criticisms focus on lack of publicity and detailed information; difficulty in getting access to some guidance because of the hours available; and points about the accuracy of some information. An area of criticism the provider will be aware of is the lack of time available to talk to those in full-time employment, given that the core remit is to attend to the needs of the long-term unemployed. Also publicity is recognised as a problem by the provider who is anxious not to promote their services to such an extent that where they cannot cope with the subsequent response from adults. The provider tries to ensure that clients are seen within a week and it is a reflection of the high expectations or anxiety of the client like the graduate quoted here who found the wait disconcerting.

Case study F

Aims -To increase awareness of the range of training available and therefore to promote the uptake of training.

Positive comments:

— *Being a mature student, it was very confidence-boosting.*

— *In comparison with colleges etc they were very useful and not lacking in information.*

Negative comments:

— *Pretty bad in terms of careers advice, especially for those unemployed for some time.*

— *Getting information was difficult. If I hadn't remembered seeing advert I wouldn't have come across it. Never seen it advertised in job centres.*

— *Information in agency wasn't helpful and accurate.*

Summary • These comments are equivocal but as with all guidance services potential clients feel guidance services could be better advertised.

Case study G

Aims - The taught guidance course Options and Choices uses SCOTVEC modules for women returners to build up their potential and facilitate any actions they decide to take after taking stock of their circumstances and lives.

Positive comments:

— *Need more courses like this one, especially with crèche facilities.*

— *Confidence important to build – helpful.*

— *Course was very helpful – crèche was useful, didn't know what to expect when I first went along but now I know much more and have a better idea about what I want to do.*

— *Very helpful. Informal approach. Reached many people. Not too intimidating.*

— *Very helpful and friendly designed to suit people on course.*

Negative comments:

— *They need to market themselves more. A lot of people don't know who they are or what they do.*

Summary • There are so many positive comments about this form of guidance it probably reflects the sheer quantity of attention received by these clients following a full-time, intensive guidance course. They will have had the benefit of many hours of reflection, advice and discussion about their futures compared with most of the other case study clients. Most adults seeking guidance usually only have the benefit of short, one-off events.

We cannot make too much of these comments in terms of checking the frequency of positive comments against the negative comments for each provider as an indicator of how well matched the service was to clients' needs. This is because they are responses to an optional question and the numbers are small. Rather, the comments can be seen as illuminating problem areas and areas where the service is working well as identified by the people who answered the final optional question. Only in this sense are they an indicator of match and mismatch of the providers' services with some of their clients needs.

The common negative themes that appear across most of the case studies are:

- a perceived lack of publicity of the providers' services
- a concern about how up-to-date and accurate providers' information is.

Both of these criticisms were implied in our findings reported in Chapter 4 where clients had the chance to make suggestions on how their guidance could be improved. Both points also can be seen to be linked to resources. As we saw in Chapter 3, providers are wary of attracting so many adults if they do not have the necessary resources to cope with them, and staff time and money is needed constantly to maintain and up-date their information.

The common positive themes that appear across most of the case studies are:

- providers were generally very helpful
- providers boosted confidence and were friendly and encouraging

Overview

These comments do not contradict the client's perceptions of guidance services reported in our survey. The concerns and criticisms made in response to the optional, final question echo suggestions the adults made about the possible improvements to the services they used. The comments reported in Table 10 also show that people wanted more detailed information and more publicity.

In addition to the good news that providers were generally helpful in meeting the adults' guidance needs, it is particularly noteworthy that the adults stated that providers helped boost their confidence and were encouraging. This is important because adults can often lack confidence when thinking of participating in education.

It would seem that the format of the 'anything-else-to-add' question has stimulated respondents to be more lucid in their praise or criticism of their provider. So, what weight do we give to these comments? We have to remember that when asked about their levels of general and specific satisfaction with their provider's service most respondents were very satisfied. These final points (apart from those comments which are very clearly very strongly felt) could, therefore, be 'fine-tuning' or minor comments and observations which did not drastically affect the quality of their guidance. Also, we have to remember that in trying to provide a glimpse of different providers services we are not comparing like with like. Our case studies were selected to reflect, to some extent, the range of guidance providers (for example, in terms of modes of delivery, location, purpose, size etc). Therefore, we cannot measure one provider against another using their client responses.

To some extent, the question we have asked on whether the providers have met clients' needs is impossible to answer. This is due to the fact that the circumstances and needs of people seeking to participate in education and training and, therefore, seeking guidance is so varied. This has been shown in the research on adult education (for example, Munn and MacDonald 1988, MacDonald, Munn and Lowden unpublished, Tough 1971, Cross 1981, Blair, McPake and Munn, 1993). Such research has revealed that adults participate in education and training for a variety of reasons and to fulfil a variety of needs. Also, the ability to participate and to cope on courses can be affected by such factors as time constraints, their level of educational attainment, study skills; financial circumstances, family and work commitments; level of self-confidence; geographic location and access to educational opportunities and the range of demographic factors such as age, sex, ethnic, and employment status. Guidance is accepted as playing a key role in the process of facilitating adult participation in education and training by providing information, advice or support which helps adults make appropriate choices about their participation. Guidance can also support adults while they are doing courses. To meet the vast range and complexity of adults' needs and circumstances, providers of guidance also have had to be

diverse in their response. While some providers will focus on one area more than another, they all require some understanding of all aspects of guidance and opportunities.

This backdrop of the complexity of adults' needs and circumstances, the range of provision we have looked at and their clients who were covered by our survey illustrate the complexity of attempting to assess whether guidance is meeting the needs of adults. Indeed, this complexity has implications for developing common criteria in evaluating effective, quality guidance. It is this area we now look at in Chapter 6.

6 The effectiveness and quality of guidance provision

Any discussion about the effectiveness and quality of guidance first needs to clarify what constitutes 'good' guidance. What are the criteria for effective and quality guidance? In the UK guidance world there is now general consensus about the definitions and criteria of good, effective and quality guidance.

Perhaps the most well-known criteria of good guidance were identified by UDACE (1986) in *The Challenge for Change* which set down the features of any adequate educational guidance service (see Appendix 3). This UDACE list is mainly concerned with features which facilitate guidance processes but the key to successful guidance has to be in the nature of the interaction between clients and providers.

Our Study, as with most other research, does not have access to this often confidential interaction between client and provider. We have been dependent on peoples' accounts of the guidance they provide or receive.

The Standing Conference of Associations for Guidance in Educational Settings (SCAGES), a UK-wide federation of associations and national development agencies with an interest in guidance, subscribes to the following fundamental principles of how quality guidance providers should conduct themselves

- the aim of guidance is to enable learners to take full responsibility for their own decisions and the implementation of actions arising from those decisions;
- in all guidance activity the interests of the learner are paramount. The learner should understand and as far as possible be in control of the processes;
- guidance is not concerned with selecting, recruiting or directing learners to meet the requirements of institutions, employers or others;
- final responsibility for decisions always rests with the learner;
- guidance is provided in confidence and information disclosed during the guidance process remains the property of the individual learner;
- guidance is provided on equity of choice and value, and therefore actively opposes arbitrary or stereotypical discrimination against any member of society.

This model of guidance, in theory, puts the responsibility and control pre-eminently with the client. While there is consensus on the broad criteria of effective and quality guidance (what we have referred to as facilitating features), debate and consultation continue on how these criteria can be realised in educational guidance and how the qualities of providers and the competences of their personnel can be assessed and made transferable. Some of the most recent and significant efforts to look at these issues include the work done by

Rivis and Sadler in *The Quest for Quality in Educational Guidance for Adults: A Discussion Paper* (1991) and the work done for the Advice, Guidance and Counselling Lead Body in 1992. Rivis and Sadler emphasise that quality in educational guidance for adults begins with the users who are made up of individuals, groups and other agencies. The mood in the current climate of education and training is that 'everyone providing a service related to education must be interested in ensuring quality' (page 5).

Our findings on the role of monitoring and evaluation in providing quality guidance

We have seen in the first part of this chapter that one of the most important factors or criteria in providing effective quality guidance is the undertaking of monitoring and evaluation of the service. Looking at the providers in our case studies we find that on examination, there was much variation in the levels of monitoring and evaluation each undertook.

Three providers (cases studies A, D and F) had very formal policies on guidance in which monitoring and evaluation was embedded. The monitoring was usually on an annual basis and linked to external accountability. All of these providers had used the results of their monitoring to adapt and improve their services:

> *you'll see that performance monitoring and evaluation is high on our list of priorities. What we've done in advance of that is that we've looked at our work and tried to set targets. This is just to give us a feel for things, we feel it'll take us about a year to get into the whole area of performance monitoring, but we've looked at the different areas of our work and divided it up into quarters, so we've got annual targets. We've set a target, that 2/3 of our work will be with the unemployed and 1/3 etc and how much group work are we likely to do, the labour market, contact with employers and on a quarterly basis, we take all the statistics and can monitor it against our targets. Now we have very complicated statistics and it's all collated on computer. We keep information on clients, male or female, the age range, the sort of enquiry, the outcome and so on, so we're looking at that sort of information on a quarterly basis. One of the things we haven't done, but we're very anxious to do in future is the follow up of clients. We have devised follow up questionnaire/evaluation forms and so on, but because of the lack of clerical support, we're under an awful lot of pressure.*
>
> Adult guidance co-ordinator (Case study D)

> *It changes all the time. The review was done in January and already we're thinking of replacing one of the packages. We'll have a big update in August. Because it's resource hungry, the follow up with individual clients would be an area which needs to develop. A survey was done with around 30 clients, randomly selected, by a volunteer with no axe to grind. 90% of the 30 said they found the service helpful.*
>
> Adult guidance co-ordinator (Case study A)

Common features of these providers include:

- their service is annually reviewed and updated. Quantitative measures in the form of client numbers, their requests and their treatment from the service provide evidence of performance

- informal and 'qualitative' information is gathered from the staff involved in the various parts of the service who are asked to comment on its effectiveness
- methods of monitoring are also reviewed with continually more systematic and diverse methods being implemented such as client record cards which every network member completes to monitor clients, specific performance targets, and client follow-up procedures. In one example, the next annual review will see 'electronic' questionnaires used to gather information on client satisfaction.
- an emphasis is placed on staff development to ensure that the services are effectively delivered.
- some external evaluations occur from such sources as HMI, FE, the careers service and the audit commission and advisory and steering groups which continually monitor the services.

Information from their monitoring then feeds back into provision and is often set out in the annual development plan. The main factors affecting these providers' ability to monitor their effectiveness is the amount of clerical support and time they can afford to devote to processing the information.

The remaining four providers used less systematic and less formal monitoring of their services. These typically were characterised by:

- some basic data are kept on client use and guidance delivered to provide 'objective' evidence on how the provider has dealt with problems
- subjective evidence accumulated from informal contacts and meetings and word-of-mouth is seen as an important form of feedback
- the mix of formal and informal evaluation feeding back into provision; this is easier to do for the more objective areas such as financial support. It is more difficult to gather information on (and if necessary modify) tutors' interpersonal skills involved in guidance.

These providers had no regular feedback from clients, nor had they developed criteria relevant to their own particular service. It is difficult, therefore, to see what justification, other than anecdotal evidence, they might have for making changes to their service. This must be balanced with the fact that some of the difficulties involved in monitoring are outside the provider's control, particularly such things as recruiting extra staff to process the information such exercises produce.

The three case study providers with systematic and formal evaluation of their services saw it as an essential part of their provision and were the same providers with the most formal policies on their guidance provision. They stressed that their policies shaped their guidance practice and ongoing and thorough monitoring fed back information on the effectiveness of their services. This information would then, if necessary, refine or change their policies and practice. However,

they were aware that their policies and provision could also be affected by external and internal factors. This process can be represented diagrammatically:

The four providers with no or little formal monitoring also recognised the importance of monitoring and evaluation. However, certain difficulties or reasons were given as factors affecting their ability or need for formal evaluation. These include:

- monitoring and evaluation is recognised as not systematic and they feel it could be improved. However it would be a costly exercise
- difficulties in covering the range of qualitative and quantitative criteria necessary to give a holistic view of provision
- monitoring and evaluation would need a lot of staff time which is needed on other important areas
- monitoring effectiveness more systematically is desirable, but additional money and staff would be needed.
- systematic and formal evaluation of effectiveness has not been necessary to date, as qualitative reports from staff have been sufficient.

In other words, systematic monitoring and evaluation is costly, detracting resources from more important use of staff time and may not be necessary in any case. While the UDACE criteria and their standards, procedures and codes of practice for quality guidance specify the need systematically to monitor guidance provision, are such measures always necessary? One provider (case study G) argued that because the service is aimed at adults, people who are attending because they want to, perhaps the best indicator of effectiveness is the continual attendance of the adults. If the services were failing to meet the needs of clients, the adults would leave. Using this criterion it is argued the guidance provision is successful. However, one could argue that, while there is some logic in this statement, areas of improvement could be overlooked, or the adults might have low expectations of the guidance services and so attend without getting the full benefit of an improved service.

One provider who currently has little or no formal monitoring of the service obtains much of the funding through the LEC. Nevertheless they recognise the fact that in future such funders will require more formal accountability using performance indicators. Another provider with informal monitoring saw more changes on the way as external accountability was also likely to impinge on how the service was evaluated:

> *We don't use formal evaluations of what we do. We provide reports of, say, numbers of people who refer themselves etc and I suppose that success is for others to evaluate as well as ourselves. I think we'll have to become more accountable in terms of providing SOED etc with more information. But at this moment, I think that we're flying by the seat of our pants. If we weren't effective, we would have heard about it by now from people. There are lots of things we don't do too well, in terms of the speed we do things, because we're spread too thin, I'm not all that happy about. You're just not getting time to spend to do things... you couldn't say it's all done well, but it's reasonable. The emphasis on quality nowadays is interesting, because it's an area where I think everyone in the college can get behind.*
>
> Head of FE college student services

From this overview of our provider case studies we can see some of the factors which they identify as affecting the wish or ability to monitor and evaluate their services. These focus on accountability to external agencies and a self evaluation dimension. These include:

- scale of operation, for example perceiving the service as too small to need formal monitoring
- external funding tied to requirements for accountability
- funding available for adequate numbers of staff to allow time for monitoring
- a desire to ensure formally that the provision is effectively catering for clients' needs.

Even if and when providers do want formally to monitor their services, how can they be sure they are operating in accordance with the various, yet similar codes and principles of quality and effective guidance? Also are all of the principles universally applicable to the wide range of providers and the diversity of clients needs they attempt to cater for? Rivis and Sadler (1991) usefully summarise the key issues affecting the provision of quality systems of educational guidance and the implications for generalisable standards of quality. These are:

- how far can overall standards be set when local contexts can vary so greatly?
- which standards must be regarded as absolutes and which as 'operational targets'?
- what measures can be used where the outcomes are not easily measurable?
- how appropriate are quality models developed in a business or industrial context for complex interpersonal processes?
- how can user/customer 'needs' be defined and by whom?
- how does the adequacy of resourcing relate to quality?

They conclude by pointing out that while the issue of quality and effectiveness in adult educational guidance has been frequently addressed, often with a particular emphasis on monitoring of users and evaluation of the service provided,

no widely used, systematic quality systems have yet been adopted. Rivis and Sadler (1991) feel '...it is possible to construct a broad 'quality framework' for educational guidance for adults, which may also be of use to other types of guidance providers and users. However, such a framework can only be used as a guide for the development of local systems, which will need to incorporate locally-set standards'.

From a newsletter of an adult education conference held in Glasgow 11/12 March 1993, under the auspices of the Scottish Office Education Department (SOED) and the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE) we can get some indication of the state of the debate on providing widespread quality guidance in Scottish adult education.

HMCI Ron Tuck stated that there was a need not to eliminate or rationalise guidance provision, but to manage and orchestrate the complex diversity that currently exists. He stressed the importance of 'pre-entry' guidance on the ground that if this was effective then 'the rest tends to fall into place'. Most 'ongoing' guidance was seen as reactive and informal, which was not necessarily wrong, but he felt that it did need to be more structured and planned. The system needed local guidance networks based on cross-sector collaboration, and in built evaluation and quality control. He proposed a seven point action plan for adult guidance in Scotland which would help ensure effective and quality provision.

- develop qualifications for adult education guidance providers
- challenge sector stereotyping
- regional networks need mission statements and development planning
- establish good practice guidelines and quality standards
- recognition of achievement of regional quality
- evaluation and reporting by HMI
- dissemination of good practice

The emphasis is on the development of local/regional guidance provision. The interpretation of relevant guidance standards and monitoring of how well these standards are being met by providers would be done at local level. This would agree with the optimum way to develop quality services proposed by Rivis and Sadler (1991). Some might argue, with justification, that the development of such an action plan requires funding, resources and the assistance of an independent national body for adult educational guidance (similar to the National Education Guidance Initiative established in 1988 for England and Wales). At the March 1993 conference, the Minister for Education at the Scottish Office, Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, announced a new national initiative to promote development in adult guidance, based on current good practice. Could this facilitate the establishment of nation-wide, locally organised quality guidance provision? Only time will tell.

Overall, it seems that the pressure from multiple sources and factors for increased monitoring and evaluation is leading to a trend for more formal systems. This is in line with the requirements specified in the many guidelines for quality guidance. However, we must remember two points; firstly, as Rivis and Sadler (1991) stressed, frameworks for quality guidance should be used only as guides and should incorporate locally-set standards. Secondly, when such standards and targets are being set who will set them? Will the funders of guidance always subscribe to the principles of quality agreed upon by UK guidance providers?

7 Our findings and other Scottish research on guidance

In this chapter we draw together the main themes running through the findings of this project and reflect on how they compare with the state of guidance in Scotland and the wider literature.

Strand 1: Guidance provision in Scotland

This part of our research provided the basis for the empirical strands 2 and 3, and enabled us to set our work in the current context of Scottish educational guidance. It built on the earlier work of SIACE (1986) by updating the description of Regional and Island Authority provision for 1992; updating the main sources of guidance available to adults; and highlighting the key steps that need to be taken to improve guidance provision in view of any identified gaps in provision.

We also used it to help identify the seven providers case studies of good practice. The main themes to arise from this strand were:

- There has been a marked increase in provision of guidance for adults in Scotland since the first SIACE survey of 1986.However, this provision is unevenly distributed throughout the country, and ranges from minimal (information only) to high quality guidance based on the UDACE, NAEGA and ICG criteria of quality provision. As a result of the nature of this provision, adults' access to guidance is still too much determined by chance, depending on where they live and what they discover to be available.
- Much high quality guidance is still delivered by individual professionals on an *adhoc* basis, as an adjunct to their main work, in circumstances where often there is no formal arrangement for provision of guidance for adults (eg. Careers Officers).
- Outreach work and innovative projects for particular target groups have a built-in guidance function which enables client-centred guidance to be genuinely available. In many cases this type of work requires to be extended.

Comparisons

How do these conclusions and themes compare with other overviews of Scottish adult educational guidance? Perhaps the most recent and complete overview is that done as part of a report by HMI (1992) *The Education of Adults in Scotland*. This report echoes strongly the findings of our Strand 1. The HMI report also found educational guidance was available from a wide range of services but that there was no national co-ordination of adult guidance. It pointed out that in most cases

regional co-ordination was limited. The lack of national and regional co-ordination was seen as having serious implications for the quality of adult guidance throughout Scotland. However, as we have seen in our Strand 2 case studies of providers, there are some examples of good regional co-ordination, although most of it is informal. From the information gathered in our case studies, it appears that this informal co-ordination in the form of active networks, driven by the motivation of committed guidance personnel, has enabled providers to perform outwith the limits that their resources would normally dictate. Through such networks they have provided good guidance for adults, shared experiences with other providers and communicated good practice. Carefully managed cultivation of such systems into more systematic and well-resourced national and regional systems would reap great rewards.

Strand 2: Case studies of adult educational guidance

This part of our project focused on providers identified as offering good practice in their guidance services to examine the factors which they felt affect their guidance and the organisational features they had adopted to help them provide quality guidance. The common themes running through the findings of this study were:

- The first is the importance of resources. It is the unpredictability of funding which causes most anxiety. Providers are not working from zero funding. Annual budgets are based on established practice. The absolute level of funding inevitably affects the scope of provision, the staff establishment and the facilities available to the service. Other features may be more vulnerable to the vagaries of funding such as:

  - staff retention and, therefore, morale
  - the extent of innovation
  - develpment of mid and long-term strategies
  - decisions on publicising and extending all or parts of the service
  - the ability to provide appropriate staff development

- A further theme is the variance of written formal policies.It appears that those providers who were funded by Regional Councils and/or LECs were more likely to have formal written policies and formal organisational structures. Annual plans and development plans which set down their remit, how they would achieve this and reported on the effectiveness of their guidance were also typical of these providers. Other providers had varying levels of formality of policies. Sometimes certain aspects of their provision would be more formal than others. For example, the pre-entry guidance of the two educational providers was more formalised than their ongoing and pre-exit guidance. The move towards more formality of policies, linked to greater accountability, was perceived by such providers as very likely. One of these providers stressed the need for such formal policies in that it helped aid a sense of direction and improved efficiency:

  [we need formal policies] *not in the closed bureaucratic sense or anything like that, but in the way that social work, for instance is in a turmoil at the moment, because to a certain extent they haven't realised the implications of not having an orthodoxy.* [and]

because you haven't evolved a rigorous practice which is underpined by theory and research. In our case, we haven't used the educational technology side of it; we haven't done research into what counselling is in this context, what is effective, what isn't possible and so we have got nothing to apply to our practice.

Senior tutor counsellor

- The importance of guidance personnel's skills, knowledge and the personal commitment of guidance personnel also emerged. In the providers we looked at there was an emphasis on improving staff skills. Different providers dealt with staff development within the context of their resources and organisational needs. Those providers with formal policy structures had staff development written into them and were still attempting to adopt more systematic ways of identifying staff development needs. Their monitoring of the system also helped identify staff development needs.

  All providers looked favourably on requests from staff for training. Some formal guidance qualifications were seen as limited in their usefulness. For example the Diploma of Careers Guidance was seen as generally aimed at working with younger people and 'has not moved with the times'. New, specific adult guidance qualifications were eagerly awaited. Qualifications were seen by all providers as just one dimension of staff qualities and development, as their experience and personality were often just as important as formal qualifications. Often, where collaboration between sectors and networking existed, the providers would bring in staff from other organisations, agencies and institutions to provide training. Staff who had received external training would subsequently train their colleagues. The value of staff development across the providers was summarised by one person:

  It's to do with quality, raising the standards of guidance and making people within guidance feel valued, which has been a problem, particularly in colleges, where guidance wasn't always seen as an important issue. We go to a lot of trouble to make sure that the system works well and the last thing we want is for someone to make a mess of it. The client might know if it is the individual or the system ...we rely on staff to tell us what our needs are as well. Our staff are very professional.

  Adult guidance co-ordinator

- Networking and regional co-ordination is also important.Networking can ameliorate some aspects of a shortage of resources. For example, by referring clients providers are unable to deal with because their own services are constrained by limited funding. Networking was particularly valued by the providers in our cases studies, with four of the seven being members of very extensive regional networks linked with UK-wide associations. Most of the providers were very active in making themselves known to other guidance and educational providers and in facilitating network-building to the mutual benefit of all members. Networking was important primarily to overcome the problem of guidance personnel 'having to know everything' and the need to know what other providers were doing to avoid duplication of services in the same geographic area.

  Rather than publicise their services generally to the public with the possibility of not being able to meet the demand, some of our providers felt it more

productive to devote more effort to developing networks to establish more effective referral systems. In addition to their involvement with formal region-wide networks some providers were involved with, some would develop "sub-networks" (at group level) to meet the needs of specific client groups who had emerged as having special requirements. This type of networking was seen as the only way of meeting such clients' needs:

> *We saw a lot of people with a whole range of disabilities, learning difficulties as well as physical, emotional and health problems etc. We saw the need for more contact between all the agencies involved and actually arranged to get the agencies together. It is an area that we could devote a lot of time to but we feel we're not resourced to do so, because it's a fairly time-consuming client group to deal with, with sometimes very small rewards.*
>
> Senior guidance worker

- A final theme is the importance of monitoring effectiveness of guidance provision. While there was much variation in the extent to which the providers formally monitored their provision, all of them recognised the importance of this activity. As we have seen, those providers with explicit, formal guidance policies and organisational systems were more likely to have formal monitoring and evaluation of their services. These informed and, if necessary, refined their provision. Such providers in our sample were usually those who had a region-wide remit with regional council funding.

  The providers also drew attention to the importance of qualitative performance indicators, and the difficulty in monitoring them. For example:

> *the relationship that exists, the atmosphere in the room, what students indirectly tell me. If they say 'I went to my counsellor, but I didn't really like to talk to him about the trouble I'm having at work'. Maybe some people never will talk, but if I was constantly getting that sort of feedback, I'd begin to ask questions about whether that counsellor is really accessible. ...but this is very difficult to measure*
>
> Senior tutor-counsellor

All providers commented on the resource implications of implementing a formal monitoring system, This was particularly true of smaller providers:

> *I would say that in the voluntary sector generally, so much of my time is involved in piloting innovative programmes, so there's less time for doing the fine tuning, unless you get special money to do an evaluation. I think we do have to evaluate everything we do more thoroughly, more systematically, but not by report after report. The thing about adults is that they're there because they want to be there and if numbers drop off, that's one of the best indicators and if there's constant feedback and communication.*
>
> Tutor-organiser

Such providers felt that they had relied to date mainly on informal methods and these had served quite well.

The drift towards more formal evaluation and monitoring seems to have

gained a momentum. This is perhaps due to pressure from guidance associations striving for standardised systems of achieving quality or from funders who require accountability and aspects of provision they pay for to be measurable.

Comparisons

The findings from this strand are similar in wider Scottish reviews of the current state of guidance (again using the HMI report 1992). They cover, first of all, the difficulties providers face when publicising their services if they are uncertain how they will meet the possible demand. Secondly, there is the importance ascribed to staff development and thirdly the fact that providers often spend a lot of time helping other providers. In terms of this last point, we have seen that while this draws on providers' time it is not wasted because it usually reinforces or develops networking and thereby promotes good practice. If more systematic regional co-ordination existed to facilitate better referrals and dissemination of good practice, then the overall quality of regional guidance would improve. There would then be less need to offer continual help to other providers.

Alexander and Steward (1987) in their study *Issues in the Development of Guidance on Adult Learning Opportunities in Scotland*, stated that agencies might be biased towards certain providers and not, therefore, impartial in their advice. Our research found no evidence of this. This might be due to our selection of examples of good practice. Even in those providers in our sample who were part of a wider educational service, there was a strong ethos of client-centredness and impartiality. This was in spite of any opportunities they might have to blur the distinction of marketing with guidance or be directive in their guidance,However, impartiality on a wider scale might be more vulnerable now further education colleges are incorporated, and the market forces become more prevalent in education.

The HMI report (1992) pointed out that there was no planning or provision of services to meet any set of guidelines such as the UDACE criteria of quality guidance. While this is true at a national level in terms of government planning and funding for guidance, there is evidence that providers have attempted to follow the widely recognised principles of quality guidance (of UDACE and SCAGES) within their regional and local contexts and their levels of resources.

Strand 3: Survey of clients' guidance needs and satisfaction with their provider

This strand of our project attempted to obtain the clients' perspective on adult educational guidance. These adults (158 in number) had been identified by the providers in our seven case studies and had chosen to take part in our survey. The demographic characteristics of the clients suggest that these respondents were perhaps better educated than the national average. In this strand emergent themes fell into six categories:

- The first concerns nature of client demand for guidance.The majority of clients in our survey were mainly seeking information on the availability of courses and vocationally-orientated advice. Their 'secondary' needs included: how to get on to courses; what opportunities existed after certain courses; information on courses related to personal interest; financial advice (mainly bursaries) and assessment of their abilities.

- A further aspect was overall satisfaction with the guidance provision. Most clients were satisfied with the guidance they had received. They felt that they had been given the information and help they had wanted from the provider.

- Improvements to guidance services emerged as another topic. While the clients were very satisfied with their guidance, about half of the respondents suggested improvements to the service. They suggested information should be accurate and more comprehensive. They also recommended raising the public profile of the guidance providers.

- Adults were also concerned about modes of delivery. Most clients had received information in the form of literature followed by 'dropping-in' to see someone and then using the telephone. This probably reflects the modes used by our sample of providers. We contacted only clients of these same providers. People who had used the computer-based guidance seemed more likely to be dissatisfied with that mode compared with other modes. We can speculate that these people would prefer mediated access to computer-based guidance.

- Perceptions of the quality of the providers' services were generally favourable. From a question based on the principles of quality guidance provision, the majority of clients felt that the providers met principles of quality guidance provision comparable to those of UDACE and SCAGES. The only principles the providers tended to fall down on were that they were not well publicised and the guidance was not generally provided in an attractive setting.

- The long-term benefits were recognised. The majority of clients felt they had received wider benefits from their experience of guidance such as knowing where to obtain guidance the next time they wanted it.

Comparisons

There has been little research on guidance from the perspective of clients in Scotland. Identification of adults' guidance needs has usually been extrapolated from research which has focused on adult participation. Such work highlights the particular range of needs adults will have when returning to education. Several researchers have assessed the need for guidance amongst the adults in Scotland without consulting adults who have received guidance. Nelson's *Advice and Guidance for Adults in Scotland: Training and Vocational Education* (1989) did look at clients' satisfaction with their guidance. He found that, in general, users of guidance were satisfied with the guidance they had received and only 6% of clients did not find the help they needed. He found interesting differences between satisfaction and the types of guidance providers. Of adults using educational institutions services, 85% were satisfied compared to 79% using employers and 50% using Job Centres. The high levels of satisfaction with the guidance adults receive as shown by Nelson and our own research should be balanced against the low expectations of adults reported by Alloway and Nelson (1987) and Blair, McPake and Munn (1993).

Nelson (1989) showed that adults expressed a wide range of needs for advice and information about education and training. Factors such as gender, age, social class, and employment status affect these needs. Certain groups were seen to be at a disadvantage, particularly women and those in rural areas. Hart (1988) stated that while educational opportunities for women had increased, guidance and counselling had not. Our overview suggests that since 1988 guidance provision has increased but it is harder to assess how much of this guidance targets women. At the time when Nelson (1989) reported his findings, the demand for guidance in Scotland was set to increase. Scottish adults were seen as more interested in education and better educated than the UK population, both factors Nelson suggested were indicators of increased likelihood of adults who want guidance. From our case studies and the survey of clients it would seem that the current economic recession and associated uncertainties has influenced educational guidance to take on a more vocational slant.

We have touched on some of the issues emerging from the findings of our research on educational guidance. In our final chapter we look in more detail at the main issues and their implications for providers, policy-makers and the adults themselves.

8 Issues and implications

In this final chapter we draw together the main issues to arise from our research and consider their implications for guidance providers, policy-makers and the adults who require educational guidance. Our research has highlighted themes which are relevant to the provision of quality educational guidance for adults and has raised a number of issues pertinent to this topic. Our work has focused on examples of good practice. Consequently, we have found many positive aspects of guidance provision and all the providers we looked at were intent on doing whatever they could to meet adults' needs. However, our work has also identified more problematic themes and issues affecting guidance in Scotland. When one reviews the other research done on educational guidance for adults in Scotland, it is clear that these same themes doggedly persist.

1 Positive aspects of current guidance provision in Scotland

1.1 *Diversity of provision*

There currently exists a wide variety of sources from which adults can get educational guidance in Scotland. Such variety has the potential to cater for the diverse range of adults' needs and respond to their different circumstances. Development of educational guidance has largely lacked co-ordination and national guidelines. Care needs to be taken to preserve the necessary diversity of provision to deal with adults' needs while ensuring that replication of provision in the same geographical areas is limited by effectively using inter-agency co-ordination, collaboration and referral networks.

1.2 *Flexibility of provision*

Educational guidance providers attempt to be flexible in their response to clients' needs, even when their resources do not make this easy. For example, some providers will often 'stretch' their services to cope with an unforeseen demand from a client group which is outwith their core target group. Within their existing resources providers usually try to adopt modes of delivery best suited to meet the needs of their clients. Flexibility in the ways in which guidance is offered enables providers to meet the diverse range of clients' needs. Providers particularly adopt strategies to reach those who might otherwise be disadvantaged in obtaining guidance and yet who often need it most.

1.3 *Motivation and skills of guidance staff*

Our research has shown that guidance personnel are characterised by their high levels of commitment. Providers felt that levels of staff commitment and their personal qualities (such as being a good, non-directive communicator) were often as important as professional guidance qualifications. An issue for trainers and designers of guidance qualifications must be to what extent can these qualities be enhanced through staff development and courses.

1.4 *Client satisfaction*

Our survey of adults who used the range of providers we selected as our case studies revealed that, generally, they were satisfied with the guidance received. While we stress that these people might not be typical of all clients, other studies have also found that adults tend to be satisfied with the guidance they receive. However, such research also stresses that adults have rather low expectations of services. Many adults might, therefore, accept quite basic levels of information and advice. Our survey also showed that while many are generally satisfied, 50% of our sample suggested improvements which could be made to services. Bearing these points in mind there can be no room for complacency. However, such findings indicate that providers are on the right track and are at least meeting the initial needs of clients who have used their services.

1.5 *Regional support for educational guidance for adults*

Our research has shown that in some areas there is active support by regional authorities for adult guidance. Regional support which takes the form of reasonably secure funding for services is particularly important in that it can allow some level of predictability for guidance services for adults. This in turn means that planning can better meet the needs of adults in the region and particularly meet any changes in client demand. Regional support also appears to enhance the local and regional co-ordination of guidance services. Regions which are already operating in this way could be used as examples of good practice and, where appropriate, to devise models for other regional adult guidance systems.

1.6 *Consensus in the guidance community on what counts as good guidance*

In Scotland and the wider UK there is consensus on the definitions and criteria of good guidance. This consensus allows providers to ensure that the core principles and ethos of good guidance (ie that guidance should be accessible, freely available, client-centred and impartial) underpin their services as far as is possible. However, the extent to which general criteria of good guidance are put into effect differs across providers.

2 National and local organisational issues

2.1 While at a national level, adult education, and with it adult educational guidance, has increased, however, guidance provision for adults is still unevenly distributed. Also, **the potential for the diversity of guidance provision is weakened by the current lack of systematic co-ordination between providers.**

2.1.2 Our case studies of providers have shown the benefits of **regional networking** which **improves efficiency, economy** (for example in preventing duplication and promoting appropriate referrals) **and dissemination of good practice**.

2.1.3 **National policies which facilitate the widely recognised need for regional/ local co-ordination would benefit both adults and providers**.

2.1.4 Our **providers**, national guidance associations and the literature all **support the establishment of an independent national guidance body** which could facilitate the recognised need for greater national and local co-ordination, disseminate good practice, monitor and evaluate innovations and, ideally, provide funding to assist such innovations.

2.1.5 **There now seems to be government support for a national guidance initiative in Scotland** with the announcement in March 1993 by the Minister for Education at the Scottish Office Lord Douglas-Hamilton on the forthcoming establishment of a national guidance initiative.

2.1.6 Some of the providers in our research and also commentators on guidance have called for **the establishment of a cross-sector database or series of databases to enhance guidance provision**. Such databases could include: information on education and training opportunities; client ability and need assessment tools; information on appropriate referral routes for clients; and 'expert systems' on issues such as appropriate sources of financial assistance for clients including bursaries and clients' eligibility for types of benefit.

2.1.7 Guidance **providers** that receive funding from LECs **appreciate LECs which possess a perspective which gives equal recognition to the needs of employers and individuals**. This allows the provider to remain impartial and use funds to meet the needs of both local adults and local businesses. It would seem desirable that LECs across the country should take up a similar stance to play their role in maintaining standards of good guidance.

3 The clients

3.1 **Our research suggests there is increase in demand for educational guidance from adults who are employed but who wish to improve their prospects** for promotion by further study or who want to change careers altogether. In our survey of adults who received guidance, 41% were employed and most were seeking guidance on vocational education to better their employment circumstances in some way.

3.1.2 If more people in employment are now seeking guidance will providers be able to cope with this demand? Given the limited funding which is often aimed at providing guidance for adults seen to be economically disadvantaged, **will there be an expectation that adults in employment will have to pay for their guidance**? If so, this would contradict one of the main principles of quality guidance, ie that it should be freely available.

3.1.3 Our survey of adults who used the services of the providers in our case studies suggests that **while clients are generally satisfied they would appreciate being better informed about available guidance services. They would also like improvements in the accuracy of information given by providers**. Such comments reveal areas in which service providers could improve. At the same time adults are sometimes unaware of the constraints that providers operate under.

3.1.4 While we cannot say how typical the adults in our sample were, these **clients had used and appreciated a range of services, with various modes of provision and content.** Their responses reflect the concerns of guidance associations which claim that such diversity is an integral part of guidance services for adults.

3.1.5 One mode of delivery used by adults which was less popular than others was computer-assisted guidance. **There is some suggestion that adults would have preferred someone to assist their guidance enquiry at the computer.** This would help avoid any frustration caused by adults taking time to find their way around the system. Use of technology such as computer-based guidance seems to be more effective if it is used in conjunction with, or backed up by, other modes of guidance.

4 Funding and resource issues

4.1 **The provision of effective quality guidance is not cheap**. The setting-up and running of a service, such as a 'guidance shop', which has the appropriate levels of trained staff, materials, physical surroundings and multi-mode delivery (ie telephone, literature, face-to-face, group-work, outreach etc) can have a considerable price tag. However, as the HMI report on adult education in Scotland points out, the absence of appropriate guidance services 'limits access to learning opportunities for those adults who are perhaps in greatest need of this provision' (p 37).

4.1.2 **A commitment by Government to fund the necessary quality guidance structures** (for example, extensive regional networks/services) which would include appropriate levels of staffing and material resources (for example, one-stop, drop-in centres, and outreach centres) and which is geared to local needs **would improve adults' access to educational guidance and increase their educational and training opportunities**.

4.1.3 **In Scotland the funding for guidance is predominantly short-term**. Funding which facilitates medium and long-term guidance strategies and planning is rare. Yet without guaranteed funding with predictable future resourcing, providers are limited in planning effective guidance which continually evolves to suit the needs of their clients.

4.1.4 Currently, much funding for adult educational guidance initiatives is oriented towards those without jobs. While this prioritisation may be justified, such **specifically-targeted funding can restrict a provider's ability to develop guidance for other groups of adults outwith the target client group**.

4.1.5 There is some **concern** among providers and those in education **about the impact on guidance of the new system of funding for higher and further education and the emergence of market forces in education**. Providers feel that there might be a danger that such developments could threaten the co-ordination and networking that is widely recognised as necessary for effective guidance in Scotland. Market forces might replace the current

climate of collaboration with one of competition. The possible result of this could be that clients' needs would be overshadowed by the economics of seeking the necessary numbers of adults which would make services viable for individual providers, both of courses and guidance.

4.1.6 Providers feel that it is **important to retain the independence of guidance services** which might be threatened by the need to respond to increasing market forces. For example, some guidance services which are part of a college or university might feel pressurised to recommend only their own institution to potential students rather than referring some people to a more suitable provider. Also, if a 'voucher' system for guidance was introduced so that funds would follow the client, this could restrict guidance providers from giving the level and amount of support an adult might need. If the adult has used up all his or her 'credit' can the provider still help them to the extent they could now?

4.1.7 Given the apprehension and uncertainty about the possible affects of the changes in funding of education and guidance, **there are strong grounds for monitoring and evaluating the effects of educational funding changes on educational guidance for adults.**

5 Guidance providers

5.1 ***Policies on guidance***

The goodwill of providers is usually evident from their policies. Some of this is formally expressed in written documentation. Formal written policies which are continually reviewed in the light of evaluation of practice help providers to assess their effectiveness and be more proactive in meeting the needs of clients. **Providers should, ideally, develop formal policies on their guidance provision suited to their clients needs. These policies should be informed by ongoing monitoring with regular evaluation of services by the provider.**

5.2 ***Monitoring effectiveness***

Providers are aware of the need to reflect on the effectiveness of their practice. However, systematic monitoring of the effectiveness of provision is not common place. The cost of monitoring is also rarely included in budgeting. Fortunately, there does seem to be a move towards more systematic monitoring procedures. **Where monitoring and evaluation is not systematic, practice is limited in its ability to inform reviews of policy and thereby feedback into provision.**

5.2.3 Our survey of adult clients found that whatever the motivation for seeking guidance (most wanted vocationally-orientated information and advice) they were all actively seeking to improve their futures. Given the importance of change in adult life and the consequences of inappropriate courses of action which could arise from poor quality guidance **it would seem essential that providers, their funders including government continue to improve and monitor guidance services and their effects.**

5.2.4 We would argue that **systematic monitoring and evaluation is essential** to all guidance services for purposes of **accountability** for the spending of public monies, monitoring the **validity** of the claims made by a service and providing information pertinent to **making necessary changes** to the service in the best interests of their clients.

5.2.5 While there is consensus on the activities and principles of effective and quality guidance, **the development of standard criteria which can be applied to assess quality is more problematic**. This is largely due to the diversity of provision necessary to meet local needs. While some general criteria can be seen as absolute (such as impartiality and client-centredness), there can be difficulty in defining the 'product' of guidance or itemising guidance procedures. These can be very diverse, depending on the clients' needs, the local situation and constraints in which the provider operates.

5.2.6 Apart from fundamental principles of guidance such as client-centredness and impartiality, **providers could devise and use criteria to assess their services which are relevant to, and reflect, their own particular remit and circumstances.**

5.3 *Staff development*

Our research and that of others has shown the importance of staff development for guidance personnel. **Providers should be encouraged and supported in identifying staff development needs and in obtaining the appropriate training for staff to meet those needs.**

5.4 *Accessibility of guidance*

Our survey and case study work along with other studies of educational guidance in Scotland has found that **providers could do more to promote and publicise their services**. However, many providers are anxious that they might not have the staff and time to deal with a surge in demand for their services as a result of adopting a higher profile.

5.4.2 Often, national initiatives such as Adult Learners' Week which seek to raise awareness of educational opportunities for adults rely on guidance providers to deal with the resulting and sudden demand for information. However, these providers usually have no additional resources to deal with the increase in enquiries and have to rely on the goodwill of staff working additional hours to cope for the duration. **If providers are expected to adopt a higher profile, and also support national information, initiatives then some attention will have to be paid to ensuring that they are resourced to cope with increases in client demand.**

5.4.3 While there is consensus among providers about the activities and principles which characterise good guidance, **there is no common language which is accessible to both clients and providers.** The language of guidance can be off-putting to clients, as many adults see guidance as something people receive for help with personal and emotional problems. Many of our providers used the term 'information and advice' instead of 'guidance' .

This might be something providers feel can be best dealt with on a day-to-day basis depending on the types of clients they help. However, in less targeted, general promotion of their services, providers might have to give careful thought to the language and phrasing used in their publicity and when adults first contact them.

6 Unresolved issues

6.1 To be effective, guidance has to be responsive to changing needs of society. The difficulty is in creating and monitoring a service which can deal with both current and as yet unidentified needs. Almost all research and monitoring has focused on those who have successfully used guidance. **There is a need to focus on those who have not been able to use guidance to assess the needs of such adults and devise a range of suitable responses.**

6.1.2 One of the most noticeable absences in research on adult guidance relates to the actual outcomes of the guidance people receive. **Policy-makers, practitioners and educationalists know very little about adults go on to use the information, advice and support they have received.**

6.1.3 More research is needed on the actual interaction processes between a client and a provider. **Better understanding as to what makes for effective interaction, communication and rapport between provider and client would assist providers in delivering even more effective guidance**.

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Appendix 1: List of organisations and agencies contacted

In addition to all of the Regional and Islands authorities and established private guidance agencies the following were contacted as part of Strand 2:

Commitee of Principals and Directors of Central Institutions, Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (Scottish branch), JIG-CAL, Scottish Enterprise and Local Enterprise Companies (LECs), Network Scotland Ltd, Open College in Scotland, Open University in Scotland, Scottish branch of National Association of Guidance Services, Scottish Centre for the Tuition of the Disabled, Scottish Community Education Council, Scottish Council for Educational Technology, Scottish Office Education Department, Scottish Vocational Education Council, Training Access Points in Scotland, Universities Council for Adult and Continuing Education (Scotland), Workers' Educational Association (Scottish National Council).

Appendix 2: Survey Completion Rate

The survey intended to interview 200 adults who had received guidance. The successful number of completed interviews was 158, or 79% of the intended number. In order to allow for a shortfall of returned forms indicating agreement to be interviewed we had issued a surplus number of reply forms (318). This resulted in 208 returns, of which 158 were completed successfully. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the returns and successful interviews completed by provider. Table 2 gives a breakdown of the unusable returns by provider.

Table 1: Provider returns and successful interviews

	Forms issued	Returns needed	Actual returns	Successful interviews
Case study E (d)	50	32	50*	35
Case study A (n)	46	32	46*	32
Case study F (n)	45	32	14	12
Case study B (d)	40	32	37	30
Case study D (d + n)	71	32	27	22
Case study C (n)	50	32	18	12
Case study G (n)	16	16	16**	15
Totals	318	208	208	158

(n) = names and addresses supplied by provider

(d) = forms distributed by provider

* = names and telephone information provided to allow direct follow-up of clients

** = small modular guidance course, tutor supplied all those who were willing to help

Reminders were sent to those we had names and addresses for

Table 2: Breakdown of unusable returns

	Refusal *	Unobtainable	Did not use service	Row total
Case study E	1	13	2	16
Case study A	4	6	4	14
Case study F	-	2	-	2
Case study B	-	2	5	7
Case study D	1	-	3	4
Case study C	1	4	1	6
Case study G	-	1	-	1
Column total	7	28	15	50

Appendix 3: Activities and Principles of Quality Guidance

(a) Seven UDACE activities of adult educational guidance

- **INFORMING** – providing information about opportunities and related support facilities, without any discussion of the relative merits of different options.
- **ADVISING** – helping clients to interpret information and choose the most appropriate option.
- **COUNSELLING** – working with clients to help them discover, clarify, assess and understand their needs and the various ways of meeting them.
- **ASSESSING** – helping clients, by formal or informal means, to obtain an adequate understanding of their personal, educational and vocational development to enable them to make sound judgements about the appropriateness of particular opportunities.
- **ENABLING** – supporting the clients in dealing with providing agencies, or in meeting the demands of particular courses.
- **ADVOCATING** – negotiating directly with institutions or agencies on behalf of clients.
- **FEEDING BACK** – gathering and collating information on unmet, or inappropriately met needs, and encouraging providers to respond to these.

(b) UDACE principles/key features of quality guidance

- Client-centredness
- Impartiality
- Confidentiality
- Freely available guidance
- Commitment to equal opportunities
- Commitment to providing 'seven activities of guidance' - informing, advising, counselling, assessing, enabling, advocating, feeding back
- Accessibility
- Targeting of priority groups
- Appropriate service delivery systems: centre-based, outreach and distance
- Collaborative service delivery through a network of agencies
- Comprehensive information systems
- Interagency staff development and training
- Advocacy activities on behalf of users
- Feedback to education and training providers to bring about change
- Publicity and promotion activities
- Policy framework
- Adequate resources
- Appropriate organisation and management
- Quality assurance, including monitoring and evaluation

Appendix 4: User Survey: client characteristics

All figures are percentages unless otherwise stated.
All respondents answered these questions unless indicated.

Highest qualifications	
NONE	8
ONC-D	3
C&G-SNC	4
SCOTVEC	6
1-4 O GRADES	8
5+ O GRADES	6
HIGHERS-A LEVELS	24
PROF QUAL	6
HNC-D	12
DEGREE	20
OTHER	3

Work status at time of interview	
FULL-TIME EMP	41
PART-TIME EMP	6
UNEMPLOYED	24
RETIRED	1
GOVT TRAINING	—
F-TIME STUDENT	6
HOUSE-PERSON	17
SICK-DISABLED	3
OTHER	2

Social class at time of interview (N = 75)	
A HIGHER-INTER PROF	11
B SUP-SEC-MANAG PROF	61
C SKILLED MANUAL	13
D SEMI-SKILLED MAN	15
E UNSKILLED	–
F-TIME STUDENT	–

How long in current job (N = 73)	
LESS THAN 1 YR	14
1-2 YEARS	19
3-5 YEARS	38
6 OR MORE YRS	29

When last in paid employment (N = 83)	
1991	40
1990	10
1988-89	18
1986-87	7
BEFORE 86	13
NEVER	12

Social class at time of last job (N = 75)	
A HIGHER-INTER PROF	4
B SUP-SEC-MANAG PROF	51
C SKILLED MANUAL	7
D SEMI-SKILLED MAN	37
E UNSKILLED	1
F-TIME STUDENT	–

Age (N=157)	
20-25	21
26-29	15
30-39	38
40-49	19
50-59	7
60-65	–
66 OR OVER	–

Sex	
MALE	47
FEMALE	53

Family dependents limiting ability do certain courses or jobs?

YES	34
NO	66

Ethnic group

WHITE	99
BLACK CARIB	–
BLACK AFRICAN	–
BLACK-OTHER	–
INDIAN	–
PAKISTANI	1
CHINESE	–
OTHER	–

Disabilities

YES	6
NO	94

What: (open ended question)

GEN HEALTH PROB	N = 3
DYSLEXIA	N = 3
ILLITERATE	N = 1
MENTAL HEALTH PROB	N = 1

Anything to add (open ended question) (N = 140)

YES	54
NO	46

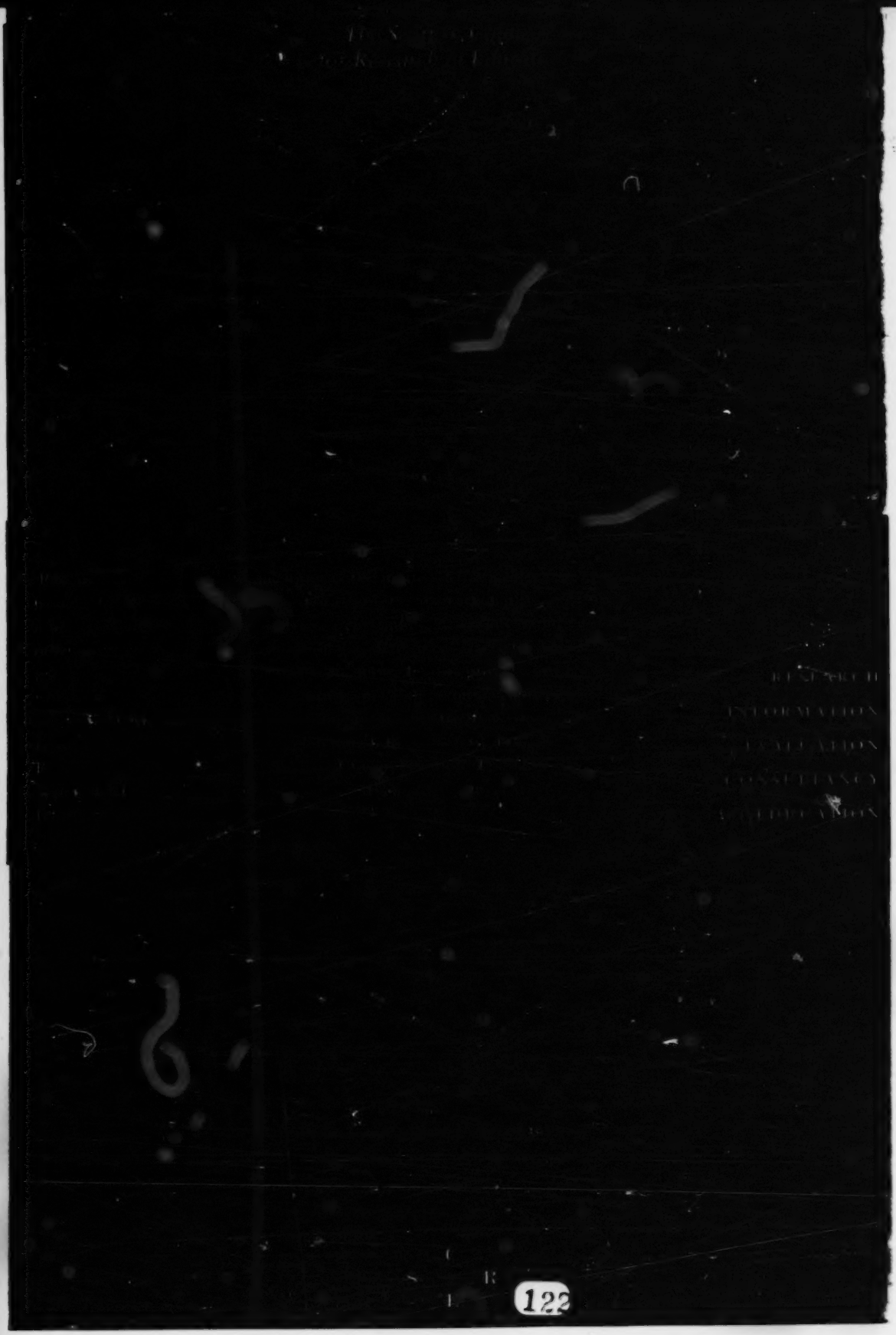
Information used as quotations for report

Appendix 5: Glossary of Acronyms

ABE	Adult Basic Education
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
DES	Department of Education and Science
ESF	European Social Fund
GCAS	Graduate Careers Advisory Service
ICG	Institute of Careers Guidance
LEAD	Linking Education and Disability
LEC	Local Enterprise Company
NAEGA	National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults
NEGI	National Educational Guidance Initiative (England & Wales)
SCAGES	Standing Conference of Associations involved in Guidance in Educational Settings
SE	Scottish Enterprise
SOED	Scottish Office Education Department
SWAP	Scottish Wider Access Programme
TAP	Training Access Point
TEED	Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate, Department of Employment
UDACE	Unit for Development of Adult Continuing Education (England & Wales)

Appendix 6: Members of the project advisory committee

Mrs Marian Docherty	HM Inspectorate, SOED
Mrs Judith Duncan	Research and Intelligence Unit, SOED
Dr Alan Brown	Principal, Lauder College
Mr Anthony Cooke	Senior Lecturer in Adult and Continuing Education, University of Dundee
Mr Ian Graham	Principal, John Wheatley College
Ms Maria Walker	Community Education Service, Tayside Regional Council
Ms Margaret Teale	Community Education Service, Tayside Regional Council
Mrs Joyce Connon	Secretary, Scottish National Council, WEA



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